

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 12-06-2009		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) 21-07-2008 to 12-06-2009	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Tapping into the US Cultural Shift: Revising Enlistment Standards Today to Avoid Conscription Tomorrow				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Jennifer S. Walkawicz, Major, US Army				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Joint Forces Staff College Joint Advanced Warfighting School 7800 Hampton Blvd. Norfolk, VA 23511-1702				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER JFSC 25789	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release, distribution is unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT This paper examines the Department of Defense's (DoD) ability to sustain an all volunteer force within the framework of our ever-changing society and the current statutory and regulatory guidelines that define enlistment standards. It seeks to answer some of the most common questions surrounding the quality of the current wartime force: (1) has the U.S. military lowered its standards for enlistment, (2) have quality indicators declined against DoD's standards or against society as a whole, (3) what impact have societal trends and cultural shifts within the American population had on DoD's ability to recruit a high-quality force, and (4) what changes need to be made in order to ensure the quality and viability of the All Volunteer Force (AVF)? In order to set the foundation for further discussion, this paper will examine the relationship between the military and society since our nation's birth. It will address the nation's history of conscription, and outline the arguments (both for and against) that led to President Nixon's decision to end conscription and create the modern all volunteer force. The paper will include a decade-by-decade analysis of military demographics and trends since the inception of the AVF, in order to determine whether or not the U.S. military has lowered enlistment standards or the quality of the post 9-11 recruit. Select societal trends will be reviewed in a context of how U.S. cultural and demographic shifts affect DoD's ability to recruit a high-quality force. Finally, a comparative analysis of military demographics and societal trends will lead to recommendations on how to best preserve the integrity of the all volunteer force – without sacrificing core qualities and competencies.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Enlistment, Accessions, Quality Indicators, All-Volunteer Force, Recruiting, Military Demographics, Propensity to Serve, Societal Trends					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified Unlimited	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 101	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Ms. Stacey Newman
a. REPORT Unclassified	b. ABSTRACT Unclassified	c. THIS PAGE Unclassified			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) 757-443-6301

JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE
JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL



**TAPPING INTO THE US CULTURAL SHIFT:
Revising Enlistment Standards Today to Avoid Conscription Tomorrow**

by

Jennifer S. Walkawicz

Major, US Army

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

Signature: _____

March 13, 2009

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Paul Melshen, JFSC

ABSTRACT

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INTRODUCTION

Ensuring the availability of sufficient numbers of trained, high quality personnel in an environment of increased deployment and armed conflict has proven to be one of the greatest personnel challenges faced by the U.S. military since the inception of the AVF.

-- GAO, 2005

In February 2008, an Army Officer minced no words as he declared, “I’m leery of building a bigger Army that’s not resourced to be the quality of this one...I came into hollow, and I don’t want to go out to hollow.”¹ Coming from any professional officer within the army ranks, that statement alone is enough to raise concerns over the quality of the force. However, when the statement is made in front of the House Armed Services Committee and the officer making the statement is the Chief of Staff of the Army, those concerns quickly become a dire warning to the nation that our military is struggling to field a quality, professional force.

That warning, uttered after three extremely challenging years for military recruiting, appeared to lend credibility to the notion that the quality of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines enlisting into the nation’s armed forces had significantly declined since 2004. When the U.S. Army failed to meet their established recruiting goals in 2005 for all three components (Active, Reserve and National Guard), along with the Navy Reserve and the Air National Guard, the nation began a dialogue on whether or not the draft should be reinstated. Many questioned whether it was possible to maintain an all

¹ General Casey, Chief of Staff of the Army, Testimony to the House Armed Services Committee, 28 February 2008.

volunteer force (AVF) during a period of protracted combat operations. After all, this was the first true test of the military since the inception of the AVF.

The modern recruiting era began in 1973 as the U.S. ended its involvement in Vietnam. As is often the case in the United States after a period of armed conflict, the end of the Vietnam War produced a desire for a post-hostilities peace dividend, resulting in a reduction in the size of the U.S. Armed Forces' active component end strength from more than 2.3 million in 1964 to just over 1.8 million in 1974.² An even more significant event, however, was the decision to end conscription and begin the process of creating a professional, all volunteer force. In 1973, the Department of Defense (DoD) entered the labor market for the first time in full competition with civilian employers for America's most precious commodity.

Since 1973, the act of recruiting quality men and women into the all volunteer force has never been an easy task. However, it has become increasingly difficult over the course of the last seven years. For the first time since Vietnam, the U.S. finds itself involved in a protracted war with no end in sight. Men and women considering enlistment today understand that it is not a question of *if* they deploy to Iraq or Afghanistan, but simply *when*. Moreover, they know that their decision to enlist will undoubtedly place their lives at risk.

In addition to U.S. involvement in a protracted war, societal changes over the last four decades have produced a youth population that, as a demographic, sometimes runs counter to military recruiting standards -- and has not made the task of enlisting young

² Data provided by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), Historical Data Tables, 2007

adults any easier. Although the number of Americans aged 18-24 has gradually increased over the last three decades, the propensity for Americans to serve in the military has dropped to less than 30% (and some studies show less than 20% of the population with an inclination towards military service).³ That fact, coupled with the alarming statistic that less than 1 of every 3 of Americans aged 17-42 meet the DoD minimum qualifications for military service, has led to an increase in enlistment waivers across all branches of service.⁴ This trend has caused some to remark that the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines joining our military today are of a lower quality and caliber than their predecessors; “Recruiters are now being authorized to pursue...stupid people. Not since the mid 1980s... have standards been allowed to dip so steeply.”⁵

The current enlistment standards have remained relatively stagnant for more than two decades. As a military, it is imperative that we assess societal changes as they relate to enlistment standards - and we must do it now. If today's Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Airmen are of a lesser quality than their predecessors, the consequences could create a long-term impact on the quality of the force. In 2001, then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld acknowledged the importance of the military's human capital, “Without the ability to attract and retain the best men and women the Armed Forces will not be

³ *Military Personnel HR Strategic Plan (2002)*: Although the percentage of youth in the population is rising, youth's propensity to enlist in the military fell 3% in the last 10 years (32% to 29%).

⁴ U.S. Army Recruiting Consortium, 2004, Presentation titled “Shaping the Youth Market”.

⁵ Kaplan, Fred. "The Dumbing-Down of the U.S. Army." *Slate*, October 4, 2005. <http://www.slate.com/id/2127487/> (accessed September 25, 2008).

able to do their job.”⁶ Failure to act may have dire consequences for the nation’s ability to field and sustain an all volunteer force – and result in a forced return to conscription.

This paper examines the DoD’s ability to sustain an all volunteer force within the framework of our ever-changing society and the current statutory and regulatory guidelines that define enlistment standards. It seeks to answer some of the most common questions surrounding the quality of the current wartime force: (1) has the U.S. military lowered its standards for enlistment, (2) have quality indicators declined against DoD’s standards or against society as a whole, (3) what impact have societal trends and cultural shifts within the American population had on DoD’s ability to recruit a high-quality force, and (4) what changes need to be made in order to ensure the quality and viability of the AVF?

In order to set the foundation for further discussion, this paper will examine the relationship between the military and society since our nation’s birth. It will address the nation’s history of conscription, and outline the arguments (both for and against) that led to President Nixon’s decision to end conscription and create the modern all volunteer force. The paper will include a decade-by-decade analysis of military demographics and trends since the inception of the AVF, in order to determine whether or not the U.S. military has lowered enlistment standards or the quality of the post 9-11 recruit. Select societal trends will be reviewed in a context of how U.S. cultural and demographic shifts affect DoD’s ability to recruit a high-quality force. Finally, a comparative analysis of military demographics and societal trends will lead to recommendations on how to best

⁶ Donald Rumsfeld, 2001 remarks to a DoD audience.

preserve the integrity of the all volunteer force – without sacrificing core qualities and competencies.

Chapter 1

Background

Every Citizen who enjoys the protection of a Free Government, owes not only portion of his property, but even of his personal services to the defense of it.

-- George Washington

The Military & Society

The Birth of a Nation

The United States and its Armed Forces have a long and complicated history. From the nation's inception, there was no doubt that a military was needed to provide for the common defense and the security of its citizens. However, the founders of this nation were fearful of a large standing army and instead preferred a clearly defined and limited role for military forces. The foundation of these desires can be traced back to the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the list of grievances made against the King. For amongst the "repeated injuries and usurpations" listed were that the King of Great Britain had, "kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures" and that "he has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power."

This desire to limit the role of the military was also based on the colonists' aspirations to create a nation founded on the underlying principles of individual freedom and a national democratic political process. When the Constitution of the United States was written, framed by the beliefs of the authors and the previous grievances that they had been subjected to, the role of the military was carefully articulated. Civilian control

was guaranteed when Congress was given the power to declare war, to raise and support armies, to provide and maintain a Navy, and to provide for calling forth the militias necessary to suppress insurrections and repel invasions.⁷

What Percentage Has Served?

Understanding the cultural aversion to and the constitutional limitations against maintaining a large standing army, it is no surprise that only a small percentage of the nation's citizens have served in the military. For the majority of the nation's history less than 1% of the population has served in the military at any given time. The exceptions to this rule, of course, are the brief periods of time in which the nation was at war.

Although conscription has played a significant role in the U.S. military tradition, it is critical to remember that the nation's military has depended on the use of volunteers to man its forces. Only in times of war, or prolonged military operations, has the nation resorted to conscription - and only on a temporary basis. Congressional action during the Revolutionary War established the precedent of mobilizing both volunteers and conscripts (when needed) for wartime service and quickly demobilizing once the war or hostilities had ended.

Even with the use of conscripts during wartime, it was not until the Civil War that the percentage of the population serving in the military approached 3%. The same statistic held true for World War I. It was not until World War II and the bombing of Pearl Harbor that the nation mobilized all of its efforts against the new threat. During this period of time more than 12% of the population served in the armed forces (56% of

⁷ U.S. Constitution, Article 1, Section 8.

the eligible population).⁸ It was during this point in history when the U.S. military emerged as a major institutional presence and a major factor in the U.S. labor force. However, the percentage of the population that would serve after the post-World War II demobilization quickly returned to less than 2% of the population.⁹ Even today, with simultaneous operations occurring in Iraq and Afghanistan, less than 1% of the population has served or is currently serving.

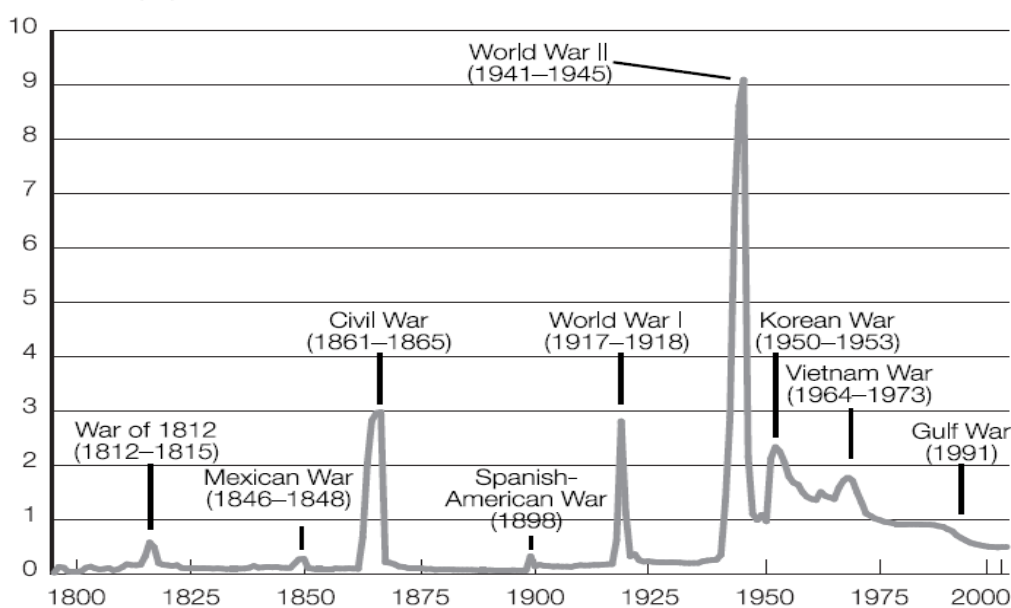


Figure 1-1. Participation in the U.S. Armed Forces, 1793-2002, Percent of Population¹⁰

Rise and Fall of Conscription

Since the birth of the United States in 1776, through 1973 and the end of the Vietnam War, conscription played a prominent role in the nation's ability to raise and

⁸ The eligible population consists of all men of military age who were qualified for military service in accordance with the medical, aptitude and conduct standards of the given time period.

⁹ David Segal & Mady Segal, *Population Bulletin: America's Military Population* (2004), 4-5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

maintain military forces. Derived from the Latin word “conscribere” meaning to enroll or enlist, conscription today is defined as “a compulsory enrollment of men for military or naval service; a draft.”¹¹ Throughout its history, the United States has used conscription as a means to expand its military ranks in times of war. However, conscription has always been used as a supplement to professional and voluntary forces already in place - never as a standalone source for providing required military manpower (except for a brief period of time in 1918 when voluntary enlistments were temporarily suspended). Regardless of when, where, or why it was used, the use of conscription has always been problematic.

The American model of conscription can be traced back to the “English Militia Tradition”, a concept that was based on the belief that “every free, able-bodied male had the obligation to furnish his own weapons and turn out under local leaders to defend the realm.”¹² It was this tradition that beget the American militia system; a system consisting of both mandatory (common militia) and voluntary (volunteer militia) service. Although it was the desire of both the Continental Congress and George Washington to raise a completely volunteer army from the ranks of existing militias, men did not volunteer in the numbers required.¹³ As a result, there was no choice but to turn to conscription to fill out the ranks. There is some disagreement amongst historians as to whether or not the Revolutionary War was fought by a volunteer force or a conscripted army. However,

¹¹ Definition from the Webster online dictionary (<http://www.webster-dictionary.net/definition/conscription>).

¹² Quote taken from an unnamed handbook prepared for the purpose of providing a general understanding of Reserve Forces and re-issued under the authority of DoD Directive 1215.15, September 8, 1987; retrieved from <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/text/p121515h.txt>.

those who state that the War of Independence was fought by a volunteer force argue that volunteers “were attracted by bounties either to the state militia or the Continental Army... the militia draft was more a means of taxation than of compulsory procurement of manpower.”¹⁴ Regardless, historical records show that The Battle of Yorktown in 1781 was fought by a Continental Army manned predominately by conscripts (or those otherwise coerced into military service). Less than three years later as the American Revolution ended, Congress discharged the Continental Army - leaving less than 100 personnel on active duty.¹⁵ As discussed earlier, this began a pattern in our nation’s history of rapidly demobilizing conscripted forces, and reducing the size of the standing army, following the end of a major war.

More than a century after the Revolutionary War, the nation once again found itself preparing for battle and trying to find volunteers to man not one, but two armies. As the Union and Confederacy began to chart their respective courses for war, it soon became evident that they each would be unable to fill their military ranks through volunteers alone. In March of 1863 Congress passed the Enrollment Act, now widely regarded as the first federal draft law. In its simplest form, this act stated that all males between the ages of 20 and 45 would be eligible and liable for national military service. Although vastly unpopular (resistance to these draft laws led to riots in the streets of New York City, resulting in more than 1,000 dead) due to substitution and commutation provisions, the Enrollment Act did have the unintended consequence of motivating men

¹⁴ Thomas Gates, *The Report of the President's Commission on an All Volunteer Armed Force* (1970), 160.

¹⁵ Segal, 4. Those remaining on active duty were tasked with manning the military stores at West Point and Fort Pitt.

to volunteer for military service instead of waiting to be drafted.¹⁶ The Enrollment Act served its purpose of providing manpower for the Union Army. More importantly, though, the act established the principle that “every citizen is obligated to defend the nation and that the Federal government can impose that obligation directly on the citizen ...the previous system of total reliance on...volunteers would not suffice in a modern, total war.”¹⁷ The constitutionality of this wartime federal draft was upheld by a divided Pennsylvania court in the 1863 case of *Kneedler v. Lane*. The court stated that the draft “represented a valid recognition of... governments need to be able to wage a war and... the individual citizens obligation to serve his country.”¹⁸ The end of the Civil War resulted in the release of conscripted forces from military service and a return to an entirely volunteer force.

It was this post-Civil War volunteer force that fought the Spanish-American War of 1898. However, conscription would again be needed for American involvement in World War I. The onset of World War I in 1914 was a concern to the United States, but not to such a degree that our nation expected to commit combat troops to Europe. However, the war did spur discussion concerning the size of the nation's military forces. If U.S. involvement was necessary, many felt that the current standing army was too small and that conscription should be considered. President Wilson disagreed with this assessment, instead signing the National Defense Act of 1916 which authorized an

¹⁶ The substitution provision provided an exemption from service if the individual could find someone willing to take his place. The commutation provision provided an exemption from service if the individual paid a \$300 fee.

¹⁷ American Military History, chapter 12, Center of Military History online version, modified April 2001, <http://www.history.army.mil/books/AMH/AMH-12.htm> (accessed January 10, 2009).

¹⁸ Gates, 162.

increase in the peacetime strength of the Regular Army (over a 5-year period) to 175,000 men and an increase in the wartime strength to 300,000 - entirely through voluntary recruitment efforts.¹⁹

In the spring of 1917, as German attacks on U.S. vessels intensified, President Wilson finally came to the conclusion that the U.S. could not remain neutral. America entered World War I on April 6, 1917, with an army woefully undermanned to meet its new wartime requirements. In May of 1917, after careful study of lessons learned from the Civil War era, Congress passed a Selective Service Act authorizing conscription. The Selective Service Act of 1917 eliminated substitution and commutation inequities, declared that all conscripts would serve for the duration of the war, and initially required all males between the ages of 21 and 32 to register (later expanded to include all men ranging in age from 18 to 45). This comprehensive draft law precluded primary reliance on volunteers; in fact, voluntary enlistments were forbidden in 1918 in order to avoid disrupting “the orderly process of selection”. As registrants were evaluated on their ability to contribute to the war effort, the least valuable became the most eligible for the draft. The American populace viewed these draft laws as, yet again, creating an inequitable draft system. World War I was also the first time in the nation's history that a Soldier's pay was less than that of his civilian counterpart. The constitutionality of the 1917 draft law was immediately challenged. The Supreme Court upheld the “Selective Draft Law Cases”, arguing that Congress's ability to declare wars and to raise and support

¹⁹ American Military History, chapter 17, Center of Military History online version, modified April 2001, <http://www.history.army.mil/books/AMH/AMH-17.htm> (accessed January 12, 2009). The 1916 NDA also increased the size and scope of the National Guard and created ROTC programs for high schools and college campuses.

armies would be “rendered ineffectual if any limit were imposed upon their use.”²⁰ This was the last time that the Supreme Court formally considered the constitutionality of the draft. The end of the war, once again, resulted in a mass demobilization of all conscripted forces (approximately 70% of the total force) and a return to a volunteer military.²¹

The period of time between World War I and World War II found the United States dealing with an economic crisis and focused on domestic issues – and, to a large extent, projecting a national policy of isolationism. The nation had no desire to again commit combat troops to the European theater. Although President Roosevelt felt that some form of conscription was both necessary and fair, he further iterated that a draft would only be used in defense of the homeland - not for another intervention in Europe. Although hotly debated within Congress and throughout the nation, the Selective Service Training Act was passed in September 1940. This act was the country's first peacetime draft and formally established the Selective Service System as an independent federal agency.²² This act required the registration of all males between the ages of 21 and 35, established selection through a lottery system, set the period of service at 12 months, require drafted Soldiers to remain in the Western Hemisphere or in U.S. territories and possessions throughout the world, and established a conscientious objector provision. Challenges to the constitutionality of this act were immediately rejected by district courts which stated that there was no constitutional requirement for war to be declared prior to

²⁰ Gates, 163.

²¹ Congressional Budget Office (CBO), *The All Volunteer Military: Issues and Performance* (2007), 3.

²² Selective Service System website, <http://www.sss.gov/backgr.htm> (accessed January 10, 2009).

the institution of a draft.²³ All opposition to this latest draft law ended on December 7, 1941 as the nation mobilized all of its resources for a war in Europe. Once the United States entered World War II, the draft laws were temporarily expanded to make all males aged 18 to 45 liable for military service (all men between the ages of 18 and 65 were required to register) and the period of service was extended to the duration of the war plus six months.²⁴ The draft was the principal source of military manpower during World War II, accounting for more than 60% of those who served in the armed forces during that time.²⁵ The end of World War II brought with it the rapid and mass demobilization of our nation's military forces.

The 1940 Selective Service Training Act set the foundation for national conscription, which included a standardization of deferments and exemptions, which remained virtually unchanged for U.S. involvement in the Korean War and the Vietnam conflict. Preoccupied with post-war military demobilization, Congress allowed the draft law to expire in March of 1947. In June of 1948, after President Truman's plan for Universal Military Training was rejected by Congress, another Selective Service Act was passed. The 1948 Selective Service Act required registration of all men aged 18 to 26, made all men aged 19 to 26 liable for service and extended tours of service to 21 months on active duty to be followed by 5 years of reserve duty. This was the first postwar draft legislation enacted by Congress and it declared that citizens of a free society must have the, "obligations and privileges of serving in the armed forces ...in accordance with a

²³ Gates, 164.

²⁴ NationMaster, <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Selective-Service-Act> (access on January 10, 2009).

²⁵ Gates, 164.

system of selection which is fair and just, and which is consistent with the maintenance of an effective national economy.”²⁶ The 1948 draft law, extended as a result of the Korean War, provided 27% of military manpower for that war. The law was extended for an additional four year period in 1951, providing ample time to complete the integration of the draft as a permanent fixture in military manpower procurement policies.²⁷ In 1953, the Supreme Court once again commented (not a formal consideration) on the constitutionality of the draft in *U.S. v. O’Brien* when they remarked that the, “constitutional power of Congress to raise and support armies and to make all laws necessary and proper to that end is broad and sweeping... The power of Congress to classify and conscript manpower for military service is beyond question.”²⁸ Following the Korean War, the military again downsized.

Even as U.S. involvement in Vietnam became increasingly inevitable, the draft was generally accepted by the U.S. population as a method of increasing the size of the nation’s military forces. The Universal Military Training and Service Act was extended in 1955, 1959, and 1963 with little to no resistance from Congress or the American populace.²⁹ Many credit the post Korean War downsizing of the military, coupled with an increase of draft age males, for the lack of opposition. In the early 1960s, faced with an unanticipated excess of draft eligible men, the Selective Service System expanded existing deferments and created new ones - resulting in a 95% exclusion rate of men aged

²⁶ Selected Service Act of 1948 Conference Report, 80th Congress 2d Session, Report No. 2438, June 19, 1948.

²⁷ Gates, 165.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 166.

²⁹ The “Selective Service Act of 1948”, was later renamed the “Universal Military Training and Service Act” on June 19, 1951.

18 to 35 from the draft eligible pool.³⁰ Escalation in Vietnam in 1965 required monthly draft calls nearing 30,000 men. America's dependence on the draft to increase the size of its military forces, committed to fighting a war outside of the hemisphere, led to a public outcry. More than 25% of men serving in the military during Vietnam were draftees, the average age at induction dropped to 19, and the combat ranks were disproportionately filled with black youth and other young men from the lowest socioeconomic groups. Public outrage concerning the draft intensified with the introduction of Project 100,000 and the revelation that the director of the Selective Service System was encouraging the use of induction as a punishment.³¹ Once again, as American combat forces left Vietnam, the nation began a rapid demobilization of its armed forces. However, the anger amongst the American population concerning the draft would not be answered simply by demobilizing conscripted forces. Instead, President Nixon directed an assessment on the feasibility of ending conscription and transitioning to an all volunteer armed force.

Rise of the Modern All-Volunteer Force

Although the use of conscription throughout the nation's history has been discussed in depth, it is critical to remember that the United States has relied primarily on a voluntary armed force from inception until 1948. The exceptions, of course, are periods of time in which the nation found itself involved in a major war, combating

³⁰ Gates, 165.

³¹ Project 100,000 was a social welfare program initiated by Secretary of Defense McNamara to bring an additional 100,000 low aptitude men into the military on an annual basis, under the pretense that military service would provide them with better civilian opportunities after the war. The majority of these men were assigned in combat roles, and their ranks were disproportionately filled with black youth lacking a high school diploma.

threats to national survival. However, the use of the draft during Vietnam was very divisive amongst the American public and the members of Congress. Although an earlier study commissioned by President Johnson in 1964 concluded that an all volunteer force was both a reasonable and a viable alternative to conscription; the recommendations of that study were forgotten as Vietnam intensified. However, at the height of the Vietnam conflict, the Department of Defense initiated its own studies on whether or not the nation could sustain military manpower procurement requirements with an all volunteer force.

Marshall Commission

In 1966, President Johnson established a National Advisory Commission on Selective Service to review: (1) whether or not the draft should continue and (2) to look at alternative systems of national service. This commission, chaired by Burke Marshall, is more commonly referred to as the Marshall Commission. Simultaneously, Congress enacted an advisory panel to look into possible methods for military procurement. In the end the Marshall committee rejected an all volunteer force, choosing instead to focus on refining draft procedures. The committee's 1967 report, *In Pursuit of Equity: Who Serves When Not All Serve?*, included recommendations for renewing and reforming the Selective Service Act and ensuring that future drafts would take place through a random lottery system.³² Regardless of the recommendations from the two independent commissions, the debate over the use of the draft continued to intensify. Proponents of an all volunteer force continually reminded President Nixon of his campaign pledge to look into the abolishment of the draft.

³² Rostker, 30-31.

The Gates Commission

Although privately President Nixon continued to support the draft, he decided to make good on his campaign pledge and in March of 1969 appointed former Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates to lead the President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force. This commission was charged with developing a comprehensive plan for eliminating conscription and moving towards an all volunteer armed force. Additionally President Nixon tasked the commission with determining what, if any, draft mechanism should remain in place in the event of a national emergency. The president declared that the commission would have the full support of the Department of Defense and all other agencies of the executive branch. In an effort to fully answer the presidents tasking, Thomas Gates put together a commission staff consisting of people from all facets of government, business, and academia. Notable members of the commission included: Milton Friedman, Alan Greenspan, Roy Wilkins, and Alfred Gruenther.³³

In order to fully understand the work of the commission and its findings, it is necessary to review arguments made both for and against an AVF. Even today, more than 35 years after the decision was made to end conscription and rely on an all volunteer force, several of these arguments continue to resurface. In many cases, arguments for or against an AVF are based on deeply held convictions and opinions. Although much has been published in an attempt to prove or disprove each of these arguments, very little empirical data exists to support corresponding claims. As a result, the best method of determining the validity of each of these arguments is to merely look at the historical data

³³ Derived from multiple sources: Bernard Rostker, *I Want You The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force* (2006), 66 & Gates, viii-ix.

represented by 35 years of a volunteer force. It is not in the scope of this paper to support or defend each of these arguments; merely to provide the arguments to allow for a better understanding of the divisive nature of the draft and the rationale for transforming the nation's military into an all volunteer force.

Arguments against the AVF

Arguments against the AVF are diverse in nature, ranging from financial objections to socio-political concerns, but most often concern themselves with the feasibility or effectiveness of a volunteer force. The two primary financial objections included: (1) that an AVF will be too costly due to the increase in pay and benefits necessary to attract volunteers, and that (2) the additional costs incurred by the DoD to field an AVF will result in programmatic funding cuts and a serious deterioration of the nation's military posture. On the socio-political side, many argued that: (1) an AVF will lack flexibility to rapidly mobilize in times of crisis, (2) an AVF will undermine patriotism by weakening the belief that each citizen has a moral obligation to serve their country, (3) a force comprised of volunteers will develop a separate military ethos that could pose a threat to civilian authority and control, (4) the AVF will be more attractive to minorities and men from the lowest socioeconomic classes, possibly resulting in an enlisted force comprised of all black men, (5) an AVF would encourage military adventurism and foster irresponsible foreign-policy on the part of Congress and the president since it would be easier to commit forces without the need for conscription, and that (6) the AVF is likely to attract low quality applicants, reducing the effectiveness

and prestige of the force.³⁴ Even more critical than the arguments outlined above, opponents of an all volunteer force believed that the nation could not provide enough qualified volunteers to meet military manpower requirements.

Arguments for the AVF

The arguments for an all volunteer force reside primarily in the inherent inequities found within a conscripted force. Milton Friedman, a member of the Gates commission and a renowned professor of economics at the University of Chicago, was an outspoken critic of the draft. In 1966, as the use of the draft became prevalent in providing forces for the Vietnam War, Dr. Friedman decried that the draft was “inconsistent with a free society” and that the nation's reliance on conscription was merely “the tyranny of the status quo.”³⁵ Others set forth the argument that conscription equated to a hidden tax; that reliance on conscription ensured that a minority of the population provided a disproportionate share of the cost of defending the nation. Additionally, the concept of the hidden tax was expanded to include the loss of income suffered by individuals who were serving (military compensation was kept at levels far below what would be necessary to maintain a volunteer force and far below comparable civilian wage levels) and costs incurred by individuals to escape and evade the draft. A third argument for the establishment of a volunteer force was that the presence of a draft allowed for misallocation of the nation's resources. The draft allowed services to manage manpower requirements inefficiently; opting to use additional manpower when non-human

³⁴ Gates, Chapters 2 and 12.

³⁵ Rostker, 16.

resources may have been more suitable. Finally, proponents for an all volunteer force believed that volunteers would be of higher quality than their conscripted counterparts and that personnel turnover would be reduced - resulting in a more experienced and more effective military.³⁶ Some went as far as to argue that difficulties in recruiting or retaining quality volunteers should be viewed “as a signal of public opinion... limiting the government's ability to take part in unpopular wars.”³⁷

Recommendations

President Nixon established the Advisory Commission on an All Volunteer Armed Force in a presidential statement on March 27, 1969. Less than one year later on February 20, 1970, Thomas Gates submitted the commission's final report to the president. The commission unanimously recommended an end to conscription and prompt movement toward the creation of an all volunteer force:

We unanimously believe that the nation's interests will be better served by an all volunteer force, supported by an effective standby draft, than by a mixed force of volunteers and conscripts; that steps should be taken promptly to move in this direction... we have satisfied ourselves that a volunteer force will not jeopardize national security, and we believe it will have a beneficial effect on the military as well as the rest of our society.³⁸

In making its recommendation to the president, the commission noted that the nation has historically and consistently relied on volunteers to fill the ranks of its armed forces. The commission concluded that “returning” to an all volunteer force would increase the

³⁶ Rostker, 78-81.

³⁷ CBO (2007), 11.

³⁸ Gates, iii.

efficiency of the armed forces, enhance the dignity and prestige of military service, and minimize government interference in the lives of its citizens.

The commission did consider future uncertainties and the possibility of a national emergency which would require a rapid growth or expansion of the nation's armed forces. The commission clearly stated that active-duty forces should be augmented by ready reserves and the National Guard in times of a national emergency. However, when it became inevitable that additional forces would be needed over an extended period of time, the commission did recommend that Congress provide for the creation of a standby draft. Although specific details were not provided, the commission stated that the draft should include a register of all males eligible for conscription, a system for selection of inductees, creation of an organization to maintain the register and administer the induction procedures, and the provision that the standby draft can be requested by the President but only invoked by resolution of Congress.³⁹

Within six weeks of receiving the committee's report, President Nixon issued his decisions regarding the future of conscription and the move toward an all volunteer force. In general, the president agreed with the findings of the Gates commission. He did, however, makes several critical alterations to the report. First and foremost he rejected the recommendation of the commission to end conscription by June 30, 1971 - delaying that date until January 1973. The president emphasized that the goal should be to reduce draft calls to zero, but that the nation should not commit to a timetable for ending the draft that was not achievable. The president announced that the draft policy must be

³⁹ Ibid., 9 & 119.

renewed in July of 1971 if the nation's foreign policy was to be viewed as credible by the international community. However, the president did direct Congress: (1) to provide funds to increase first-term military pay, (2) to direct the Selective Service to return to inducting men according to their randomly assigned sequence numbers, and (3) to phase out select draft deferments (graduate school, occupational, agricultural, and paternity).⁴⁰

The Selective Service System held its final lottery in December of 1972. On July 1, 1973, the all volunteer force was created as members of Congress allowed the draft authority to expire.



Figure 1-2: Private Murphy Cartoon, 2007⁴¹

⁴⁰ Rostker, 90-91.

⁴¹ Mark Baker, Private Murphy's Law, Reprinted in the Army Times, 29 Dec 08.

Chapter 2

Current Enlistment Standards

An Army's military qualities are based on the individual who is steeped in the spirit and essence of this activity: who trains the capacities it demands, rouses them and makes them his own; who applies his intelligence to every detail; who gains ease and confidence through practice, and who completely immerses his personality in the appointed task.

-- Clausewitz, *On War*

In order to understand the impact of societal changes on the ability of the military to attract, recruit and assess quality personnel into its ranks, one must first understand the enlistment standards for all branches of the United States military. These standards are not completely stagnant. There have been several noteworthy changes over the past several decades; sometimes in response to the Department of Defense's inability to meet recruiting goals, other times generated by changes in either the demographic or socio-economic status of America's youth, and occasionally generated by new advancements in the medical or scientific fields.⁴² Unfortunately, when viewed against societal changes during the last four decades and coupled with current operational tempos and manpower requirements, previous changes to enlistment standards are potentially insufficient to meet today's recruiting challenges.

When looking to define enlistment standards for any branch of the U.S. military, there are three primary sources to review: statutory requirements, DoD policy, and

⁴² 10 USC includes a record of statutory changes made in the area of enlistment standards, through the inclusion of a chronological amendment history at the end of each chapter.

service-specific regulatory guidance. The preponderance of statutory requirements governing enlistment into the armed forces can be found in Title 10 of the U.S. Code. The Department of Defense sets forth standards for enlistment within published instructions, directives or directive-type memorandums. Finally, each service promulgates service-specific requirements through a series of regulations, instructions, or manuals. The criteria for enlistment detailed below are not all-inclusive. Instead, this section will focus on the most relevant criteria extrapolated from the above-mentioned sources and will set the foundation for (1) examining whether or not the military has recently lowered enlistment standards and (2) determining what statutory or policy changes must be made to the current enlistment standards in order to maintain a viable and professional all volunteer force.

It is important to remember that the scope of this paper is to review standards for initial enlistment into the regular forces of the U.S. military. Although similar in nature, this paper will not address standards for initial enlistment into reserve or guard components, nor will it address the standards governing prior service applicants or commissioning sources.⁴³ Additionally, although the United States Marine Corps (USMC) is a part of the Department of the Navy, the USMC does maintain a separate and distinct manual outlining their specific enlistment standards. For that reason, the USMC will be treated as a separate military branch throughout this paper.

⁴³ Applicants who have previously served in any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces and been discharged, regardless of reason or duration, are considered prior service applicants for the purposes of this paper.

Sources of Enlistment Law and Policy

Statutory Requirements

The preponderance of statutory requirements for enlistment into any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces are found in Title 10 of the U.S. Code, particularly chapters 31 (General Military Law), 333 (Army), 537 (Navy and Marine Corps), and 833 (Air Force). Title 10 sets the minimum acceptable enlistment standards as required by law. In many situations, the standards have been modified by the military departments in order to make enlistment into their respective service more stringent.

DoD Policy

After careful review of the above mentioned statutory requirements, the Department of Defense issues instructions and directives to further clarify qualification, physical, and medical standards for enlistment into the armed forces. It is DoD's policy to "encourage...the use of common entrance qualification standards" across all branches of service, which judge the suitability of applicants on the basis of their "adaptability, potential to perform, and conduct", and which avoid inconsistencies or inequities based on gender, race, religion, or ethnicity.⁴⁴

Categorization of Quality

In an attempt to understand and easily compartmentalize enlistment standards, specific standards will be discussed using one of four categories: general, aptitude, conduct/moral, or medical/physical. These four categories are widely used throughout

⁴⁴ DoDI 1304.26.

the Department of Defense to define standards, to measure applicant quality and recruiting success, and to easily compartmentalize enlistment waivers. The general category is used when discussing all items that do not easily fit into the three remaining categories. This will include requirements of age, citizenship, gender, and dependency. The aptitude category is a combination of level of education obtained and Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) scores. The conduct/moral category looks into an applicant's behavioral patterns - focusing not exclusively, but primarily, on criminal misconduct and substance abuse. The medical/physical category defines an individual's ability to meet the medical and fitness requirements of the service they wish to enter and adapt to the physical and mental rigors of military service.

Enlistment Standards - General

The basic enlistment standards for entry into any branch of the armed forces are fairly straightforward. Title 10 prohibits the use of bounties as an enticement for enlistment (with specific language stating that enlistment bonuses or targeted pay incentives do not qualify as bounties). It also prohibits the use of substitutes - a policy stipulation which harkens back to the days of Civil War conscription.⁴⁵

There are citizenship requirements for enlistment. An individual must be either a national of the U.S., an alien admitted lawfully for permanent residence, or a citizen of a country with which the U.S. has a current standing Compact (Micronesia, the Marshall

⁴⁵ 10 USC Chapter 31, Section 514.

Islands, Palau). The Secretary of Defense can waive the citizenship requirement if such an action is “vital to national interest”.⁴⁶

As for age, an individual is eligible to enlist who is at least 17 years of age and not more than 42 years of age at the time of entry onto active duty. Any person under the age of 18 will require written consent from a parent or guardian. In 2006, the maximum age for enlistment was raised to the current standard from 35 years of age.⁴⁷

With regard to gender, the U.S. Air Force is the only branch of service with the statutory requirement that acceptance of an individual for enlistment cannot be based on gender. Title 10 specifically prohibits the Secretary of the Air Force from setting “a minimum or maximum percentage of persons who may be accepted for... enlistment according to gender for skill categories or jobs.”⁴⁸

Although not required by law, DoD policy prohibits the enlistment of any married applicant with two or more dependents under the age of 18 or any unmarried applicant with custody of a child under the age of 18.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ 10 USC Chapter 31, Section 505. An interesting note - there are no additional laws or policies which further define “national interest”, or set forth the procedure in which the SecDef can waive the citizenship requirements.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ 10 USC Chapter 833, Section 8252.

⁴⁹ DoDI 1304.26, 20 Sep 05, Enclosure 2.

Enlistment Standards – Aptitude

The two basic elements of the aptitude category are level of education obtained and AFQT score. The AFQT score is derived from the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) administered by USMEPCOM⁵⁰ to all individuals applying for enlistment into the U.S. Armed Forces. Since 1948, an AFQT score below the 10th percentile (Category V) renders an individual ineligible for enlistment. Title 10 also limits the number of applicants in any given fiscal year who score between the 10th and 30th percentile (Category IV). No more than 20% of applicants, for any given service or accession cohort, can fall into that category.⁵¹ In fiscal years 1981 and 1982, this standard was temporarily relaxed and raised to 25%. It returned to the current ceiling of 20% in 1983.

<u>Mental Category</u>	<u>Percentile (Armed Forces Qualification Test Score)</u>	<u>Definition (Aptitude/Trainability)</u>
I	93-100	Superior
II	65-92	Above Average
IIIA	50-64	Average
IIIB	31-49	Average
IV	10-30	Marginally qualified for military service
V	0-9	Unqualified for military svc
Note: Quality recruits are defined as men and women with high school diplomas (HSDG) in AFQT mental categories I through IIIA.		

Figure 2-1: Scoring Categories for the AFQT and Trainability Correlations

⁵⁰ United States Military Entrance and Processing Command

⁵¹ 10 USC Chapter 31, Section 520. A cohort is defined as all enlistments into a given branch of service and component during a fiscal year (for example: all active army enlistments would be one cohort).

Separate from the statutory requirements discussed above, the Department of Defense sets aptitude quality benchmarks for services to meet each year. DoD's goal is to require at least 60% of each accession cohort within a given year to possess an AFQT score of 50% or higher (Category IIIA). Additionally, DoD desires no more than 4% of an accession cohort to score between the 10th and 30th percentiles (AFQT Category IV) - a distinct difference from the 20% cap placed on that category by law.⁵²

In an attempt to increase recruit quality, each of the services establishes a service-specific standard for recruiting and assessing individuals scoring at or above the 50th percentile on the AFQT that exceeds DoD's goal of 60%. Although the services can alter this standard on an annual basis, these goals have remained relatively stable during this decade. For example, in 2004 the Marine Corps standard was 63%, the Army standard was 65%, the Navy standard was 70%, and the Air Force standard was 77%.⁵³

According to DoD, the possession of a high school diploma is highly desirable, but an applicant cannot be denied enlistment solely on the grounds that he or she does not possess a high school diploma.⁵⁴ However, any applicant who does not possess a high school diploma must score at or above the 31st percentile to be eligible for enlistment. In 1988, the Title 10 requirement for all applicants to possess a high school diploma was eliminated - if the enlistment was needed "to meet established strength requirements".

⁵² DoDI 1145.01, 20 Sep 05, Chapter 4.

⁵³ GAO 05-952, 72.

⁵⁴ DoDI 1304.26.

This amendment eliminating the requirement for a high school diploma was a return to statutory language used prior to 1974.⁵⁵

Of interest, Title 10 was amended in 1985, to specifically stipulate that “the number of male individuals enlisted or inducted into the Army” without a high school diploma could not exceed 35% beginning in fiscal year 1987.⁵⁶ There are no similar statutory stipulations for the Air Force, Marine Corps, or Navy.

Similar to the quality benchmarks that DoD sets for AFQT scores, the “education credential” benchmark for DoD is that 90% of an accession cohort possess a high school diploma. The remaining 10% can consist of any alternative high school credential holder or non-graduate.⁵⁷ While each of the services adheres to the DoD benchmark, the Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force have set their service-specific goals higher than the DoD standard. Both the Navy and Marine Corps desire at least 95% of new accessions to already possess a high school diploma, while the Air Force standard is 99%.⁵⁸

Enlistment Standards - Conduct/ Moral

As a general rule, Title 10 states that no individual who is “intoxicated, or... convicted of a felony” is eligible to enlist.⁵⁹ However, the law does allow the Secretary of Defense to authorize exceptions for persons convicted of a felony in “meritorious

⁵⁵ 10 USC Chapter 31, Section 520.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ DoDI 1145.01, 20 Sep 05, Chapter 4.

⁵⁸ GAO-05-952, 70.

⁵⁹ 10 USC Chapter 31, Section 504.

cases”. DoD's policy centers on the underlying assumption that applicants who possess good moral character will be less likely to become disruptive or pose a security risk. Additionally, DoD explicitly states that the U.S. Armed Forces should “not be viewed as a source of rehabilitation for those who do not subscribe to the legal and moral standards of society at large.”⁶⁰

DoD's standards and policies relating to moral character are designed to disqualify any applicant who (1) is currently serving under any form of judicial restraint, (2) has been convicted of a felony or possesses a “significant criminal record”, and / or (3) exhibits traits of antisocial behavior rendering them unfit for military service or military association.⁶¹ In October 2008, DoD revised its policy in an attempt to standardize what level of misconduct will require a conduct waiver. Instead of identifying conduct in terms of felonies and misdemeanors, DoD created four categories of misconduct: major misconduct, misconduct, non-traffic offenses, and traffic offenses. DoD then further identified the types of misconduct that would require all services to seek a waiver: one major misconduct, two misconducts, and one misconduct along with four non-traffic offenses.⁶²

Service-specific standards, while complying with the intent of DoD standards and policies, are complicated and sometimes subject to individual interpretation. The following figure provides additional service-specific standards related to moral character.

⁶⁰ DoDI 1304.26, 20 Sep 05, Enclosure 2

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Army.mil, “DoD Sets Joint Standards for Enlistee Waivers”, <http://www.army.mil/news/2008/07/02/10565-dod-sets-joint-standards-for-enlistee-waivers> (accessed March 11, 2009).

Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force
Six or more minor traffic offenses, three or more nonminor traffic offenses, two or more misdemeanors, or one or more convictions for driving under the influence or felony.	Six or more minor traffic offenses, three or more nontraffic offenses, three or less minor misdemeanors, or one or more felonies.	Five or more minor traffic offenses, two or more serious traffic offenses, four or more class one minor nontraffic offenses, or two or less serious offenses, one felony.	Six or more minor traffic offenses in any 365-day period during the last 3 years, two or more minor nontraffic offenses in the last 3 years, three or more in a lifetime, or one or more misdemeanors or felonies.

Figure 2-2: Service-Specific Moral Character Standards That Disqualify Applicants⁶³

Enlistment Standards - Medical / Physical

Although Title 10 does not provide any significant discussion on enlistment standards as they relate to the medical or physical condition of applicants, the law clearly prohibits the enlistment of individuals deemed insane.⁶⁴ DoD policies relating to medical and physical standards for enlistment are designed to create a common set of standards which eliminate possible inconsistencies and inequities based on race, gender, or MEPS location.⁶⁵ The intent of the DoD policy is to ensure that an applicant (1) is free of any contagious disease, (2) does not have a medical condition that may possibly result in excessive hospitalization, lost time, or separation from the military, (3) can complete both basic training and his or her initial term of service, (4) can physically and psychologically adapt to the military environment, and (5) is medically capable of performing all duties associated with military service.⁶⁶

⁶³ GAO 05-952, 76.

⁶⁴ 10 USC Chapter 31, Section 504.

⁶⁵ DoDI 6130.3, 15 Dec 00; MEPS = Military Entrance Processing Station.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Chapter 3.

Specific guidance regarding medical standards for enlistment into the Armed Forces is found in DoD Instruction 6130.4.⁶⁷ It is not practical, nor is it the intent of this paper, to discuss each set of medical criteria at this time. However, specific areas of concern which will be addressed later include: hearing, psychiatric and behavioral disorders, and obesity.

The Enlistment Waiver

The standards described above, regardless of whether they originate in law or policy, are not absolutes. The Department of Defense makes allowances for those applicants who cannot meet select enlistment standards, and authorizes the use of enlistment waivers in certain cases. DoD states that an applicant's eligibility should be determined by his or her ability to meet all enlistment standards, to include the ability to obtain a waiver.⁶⁸ It is DoD policy to review waiver requests and determine an applicant's qualification through the use of the "whole person review".⁶⁹ However, an enlistment waiver should not be granted to someone unless they are fully qualified.

In specific cases regarding conduct or moral standards, a favorable waiver determination is required if an applicant has been convicted of one major misconduct (to include felonies), two or more minor misconduct offenses, or has a record that provides for a pattern of misconduct (primarily define as a combination of minor misconduct and

⁶⁷ The most recent version is dated 18 Jan 05.

⁶⁸ DoDI 1304.26, 20 Sep 05, enclosure 2.

⁶⁹ DTM 08-018, 27 Jun 08.

non-traffic offenses).⁷⁰ In these cases consideration is given to the applicant's ability to adjust to civilian life following the offense, and often centers around the specifics of the offense, letters of recommendation from community leaders, and the overall suitability of the applicant for enlistment.⁷¹ The approval of a waiver request is not automatic, and the level of approval authority depends on the severity of the offense.

DoD requires a dependency waiver for any applicant that is married with more than two dependents under the age of 18 or any applicant data single with custody of any dependent under the age of 18.

Additionally, DoD requires a medical waiver for any applicant possessing a medical condition that is incompatible with established DoD medical standards for enlistment.⁷² A drug waiver is required when an applicant tests positive for the presence of either drugs or alcohol at the time of his / her original or subsequent physical examination.⁷³

⁷⁰ Ibid., Attachment 2.

⁷¹ DoDI 1304.26, 20 Sep 05, Enclosure 2.

⁷² Medical Standards are established in DoDI 6130.4.

⁷³ DTM 08-018, 27 Jun 08, Attachment 2.

Chapter 3

Military Demographics and Trends, 1973-2006

Our country's greatest military asset is the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States...

As we consider the road that unfolds before us, we remember with humble gratitude those brave Americans who, at this very hour, patrol far-off deserts and distant mountains... We honor them not only because they are guardians of our liberty, but because they embody the spirit of service; a willingness to find meaning in something greater than themselves.

-- Barack Obama, 2009 Inaugural Address

The capability of the United States Armed Forces to accomplish a given mission, or produce a desired effect, is a primary measure of military effectiveness; a measure that has its origins in DoD's ability to attract, enlist and retain high-quality individuals. The Department of Defense defines a high-quality applicant as an individual who possesses a high school diploma and scores at or above the 50th percentile on the AFQT. Research over the years has consistently linked high aptitude (AFQT scores) with enhanced performance in the military, while the possession of a high school diploma (not a GED or alternative credential) strongly correlates with the successful completion of the initial term of enlistment. As a result, the high-quality applicant who is also morally and medically sound is the most sought after and desired commodity for our nation's military.

One of the main objections to the creation of the all volunteer force was that many believed that the quality of the individual Soldier, Sailor, Airman, and Marine would decline and be lesser than that of their counterparts in a conscripted force. Although the

first decade of the AVF proved turbulent in the area of individual quality, the last 25 years have disproved that concern. Although historical data portrays an ebb and flow in the quality of military recruits, the last 2 1/2 decades have proven that the all volunteer force is able to attract individuals of a higher quality than their counterparts at large (refer to figure 3-1). The following sections will provide a decade by decade analysis of recruit characteristics and quality since 1973, with a special emphasis on the area of aptitude as it relates to AFQT scores and the possession of a high school diploma.

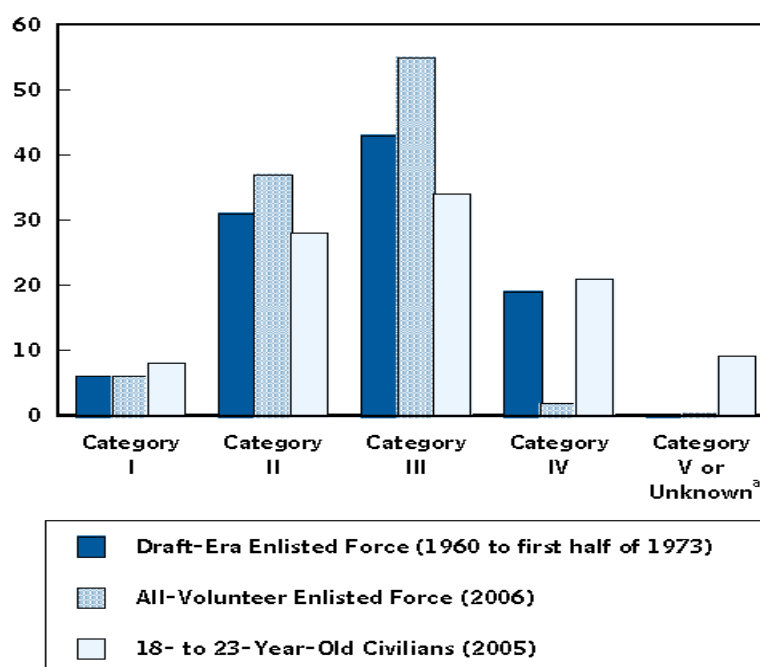


Figure 3-1: Distribution of AFQT Scores for NPS Recruits and Young Civilians under the Draft and AVF⁷⁴

⁷⁴ CBO (2007), 16.

The Early Years, 1973-1981⁷⁵

The early years of the all volunteer force were extremely challenging, especially in the realm of manpower procurement and accessions. Overall, recruit quality was very low. Public dissent over the Vietnam War and the inequities experienced in the draft still permeated the U.S. society. As the concept of a “hollow Army“ emerged, all branches of the armed forces found themselves struggling to regain prestige and public confidence.

The end of the Vietnam War resulted in the nation again collecting a peace dividend, and the number of non-prior service accessions required throughout DoD declined almost 300% from an all-time high of 822,000 in 1969 to just over 283,000 in 1976. The average annual accessions between 1973 and 1981 averaged slightly more than 347,000. During this time the average accessions to applicant rate for DoD was 47% - meaning that for every 100 applicants who volunteered to join the military, 47 met all enlistment standards and were accepted into military service.

It is somewhat difficult to accurately measure recruit quality in terms of aptitude during the early years of the all volunteer force. Part of the problem resulted from the ASVAB misnorming that occurred during 1977-1981, detected after the fact during the mid-80s. Additionally, the Bureau of Labor did not begin reporting high school diploma percentages for 18 to 24-year-olds until 1977, four years after the start of the AVF. This paper assumes a high school diploma percentage of 78% for 1973 to 1976 based on the

⁷⁵ Unless otherwise foot-noted, all statistical data contained within this section comes from the following source: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Population Representation in the Military Services (2006), http://www.defenselink.mil/prhome/PopRep_FY06/appendixd/d_toc.html (accessed on 25 January 2009), Appendix D: Historical Data Tables.

fact that statistics show less than a 2% variance in the percentage of youth possessing a high school diploma from 1977-2006. Although exact measures are unknown, aptitude data for those years is available and will be analyzed as accurately as possible within this section, using predictive assumptions where necessary.

Early volunteers for the military were less educated than their civilian counterparts. In 1974, only 60% of those enlisting into the military had earned their high school diploma. By 1981 that percentage had increased to 78.6% - almost on par with the civilian average of 78.8%. Although accurate AFQT scores are unknown, the majority of applicants enlisting during these early years reflected a score of 50 or below on the AFQT. From 1977- 1979, DoD allowed more than 30% of enlistees from AFQT CAT IV (scores less than 30). The percentage of new accessions categorized as high quality by DoD ranged from 29% to 48 % during these years.

The Reagan Years (The 80's)⁷⁶

The early and mid-1980s saw an influx of better qualified recruits attracted to military service as a result of policies designed to increase military pay and expand educational benefits. The annual number of accessions required by the Department of Defense to meet manpower requirements for all branches of service continued to decline during the 1980s, averaging slightly fewer than 295,000 recruits per year (a 15% decline from the previous decade). However, the decline during this period was less drastic than that seen during the preceding decade. Annual accessions ranged from a high of 305,000

⁷⁶ Unless otherwise foot-noted, all statistical data contained within this section comes from the following source: USD-PR, Population Representation in the Military Services (2006), Appendix D.

in 1984 to a low of 271,000 in 1988. Additionally, the average accessions to applicant rate during this period remained at 47% - no change from the previous decade.

The quality of the average recruit was definitely on the rise. In 1982, almost 83% of newly enlisted individuals had earned their high school diploma. By the end of the decade, DoD had met or exceeded its 90% target goal for six years in a row. While all services showed marked improvement from the previous decade, the Air Force was attracting the most educated applicants; 98% of new Airmen possessed their high school diplomas in 1983, and the Air Force exceeded the 99% mark by 1987. AFQT scores were also on the rise. The percentage of individuals enlisting with a CAT IV score dropped from 15% in 1982 to less than 5% in 1988 - closing in on the DoD benchmark of no more than 4%. Overall the percentage of individuals categorized as high quality exceeded 50% in 1983 and continued to increase to over 60% by 1988. Again, the Air Force was out in front, with more than 80% of its new Airmen categorized as high quality recruits by 1988. Conversely, the Navy was struggling to attract high-quality individuals. In 1989 less than 47% of new Sailors met the high quality marks.

The Clinton Years (The 90's)⁷⁷

The Clinton years resulted in drastic cuts for military manpower. Annual accessions dropped from an average of 295,000 during the Reagan years to slightly more than 191,000 during the 1990s - a reduction of more than 35%. However, the accessions to applicant rate for DoD increased from 47% in the two preceding decades to just over 50% during this time period - reaching the high point in 1992 with a rate of 54%.

⁷⁷ Unless otherwise foot-noted, all statistical data contained within this section comes from the following source: USD-PR, Population Representation in the Military Services (2006), Appendix D.

As the force continued to get smaller and civilian unemployment rates were rising, DoD's ability to be more selective and attract highly qualified individuals was increasing. DoD experienced its most qualified accessions cohort in the history of the all volunteer force in 1992 - and no cohort since then has surpassed those quality benchmarks. In 1992, 97.7% of new enlistees had earned their high school diploma. More than 75% of new enlistees scored CAT IIIA or better on the AFQT - with almost 5% in CAT I. More than 73% of individuals enlisting in the military that year were categorized as high quality applicants - five percentage points higher than any other year in history. On average during this decade, 94% of accessions had earned their high school diploma, less than 1% enlisted as CAT IV applicants, and more than 65% were categorized as high quality recruits.

Start of a New Century, 2000-2002⁷⁸

The start of a new Century saw relatively little change in the number of annual accessions required by the DoD, with an average of 193,000 recruited during the first three years of the century. There was also little change in the accessions to applicant rate, from 50% during the Clinton years to an average of 49% during this period.

A slight degradation in recruit quality began in 1999 and continued through 2002. DoD failed to meet its 90% benchmark of recruits with high school diplomas in 2001 and failed to meet its 60% benchmark for high quality recruits in 2000 and 2001. The one positive to emerge during this time was the fact that CAT IV applicants fell below 1% of

⁷⁸ Unless otherwise foot-noted, all statistical data contained within this section comes from the following source: USD-PR, Population Representation in the Military Services (2006), Appendix D.

the population, and almost 5% of the 2002 accessions were CAT I. Among the services, both the Army and the Navy were struggling to meet recruit quality benchmarks. Both services fell short of the 60% high quality goal. By 2002, the percentage of new Soldiers entering the military with a high school diploma had declined to less than 85%.

The Wartime Recruit, 2003-2006⁷⁹

Somewhat surprising is the fact that although our nation found itself fighting a war on two fronts, the annual accession requirements from 2003-2006 were actually lower than those of the first three years of the century, declining to an average of 189,500. While accession requirements declined, the accessions to applicant rate increased significantly from 49% at the beginning of the century to 53% during these four years. DoD experienced an all-time high accessions to applicant rate in 2004, accepting almost 57% of all applicants.⁸⁰

The quality of recruits during this wartime period continued the decline witnessed at the beginning of the century. Overall, the percentage of high school diploma accessions declined to 87% in 2006 - the lowest percentage since 1982. While the percentage of recruits scoring in the highest AFQT category increased, so did the percentage of recruits scoring in the lowest two categories. Both 2005 and 2006 saw more than 1.8% of their accessions cohorts enlisted from the CAT IV pool. The percentage of high quality recruits across DoD dropped to just over 60% in 2006 - a five-

⁷⁹ Unless otherwise foot-noted, all statistical data contained within this section comes from the following source: USD-PR, Population Representation in the Military Services (2006), Appendix D.

⁸⁰ Some have argued that the high accessions to applicant rate, without an accompanying increase in quality indicators, is further proof that the military was desperately accepting almost anyone who was willing to enlist.

year low. Fortunately, all but one of the services achieved DoD benchmarks for high school diplomas and high quality applicants. The Army, which was shouldering most of the burden of the prolonged ground wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, was DoD's statistical anomaly. The Army reached a 25-year low in 2006 when only 73% of new Soldiers enlisted with a high school diploma and only 45% of recruits were characterized as high quality.

It is also significant to note changes in the race and ethnicity of wartime recruits assessed during this period. While the percentage of white enlistments remained relatively stable across DoD, the percentage of black enlistments declined from 15% in 2003 to slightly more than 13% in 2006. Interestingly enough, this decline was experienced by all services except the Air Force. As the Army experienced the most significant decline from 15.9% to 12.6%, the Air Force increased its percentage of black enlistments from 13.8% to 14.7% during the same period of time. Additionally, the percentage of Asians and American Indians enlisting into the Armed Forces continued to increase, with the percentage of Asians more than doubling during this four-year period. These demographic shifts within the armed forces cannot be explained by drawing a parallel to society at large. From 2003 until 2006, the percentage of black, Asian, or American Indian 18 to 24-year-olds remained virtually unchanged.

Tomorrow's Recruit, 2010 - ?

There is no doubt that America's protracted involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan is having an impact on DoD's ability to attract and assess sufficient numbers of high-quality individuals. As of July 2007, the U.S. had deployed more than one million

active-duty personnel to Afghanistan or Iraq in support of Operations Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Because of the nature of the conflicts, the majority of those deployed have come from the Army or the Marine Corps. Further analysis shows that more than half of the active-duty Army has deployed once in support of OEF or OIF, while almost 20% have deployed two or more times.⁸¹ It is this operational tempo that led many to question whether or not the services, particularly the Army and the Marine Corps, could continue to maintain force levels during a period of prolonged combat operations. When the U.S. Army failed to meet their established recruiting goals in 2005 for all three components (Active, Reserve and National Guard), along with the Navy Reserve and the Air National Guard, the nation began a dialogue on whether or not the draft should be reinstated. Although all services met recruiting goals in 2006, the debate was far from over.

The analysis of Army recruits during 2006 shows a significant degradation in quality standards across the board. The evidence clearly reveals that the Army's cohort for 2006 was less educated and had lower aptitude scores than at any point in the last 25 years. However, not everyone is willing to accept the facts as stated. Several reports by the Heritage Foundation blatantly disagree that quality or enlistment standards have degraded, and instead make the argument that “quality is a difficult concept to apply to Soldiers, or to human beings in any context” and that “wartime U.S. military enlistees are better educated, wealthier, and more rural on average than their civilian peers.”⁸²

⁸¹ CBO, *The All Volunteer Military: Issues and Performance* (2007), 1.

⁸² Tim Kane, *The Heritage Foundation, Who Are the Recruits? The Demographic Characteristics of U.S. Military Enlistment, 2003- 2005*”, (2006), 2. The Heritage Foundation is a public policy research institute focused on formulating and promoting conservative public policies based on the principles of free

Unfortunately, neither statutory law nor the Department of Defense defines quality in the context of individual wealth or geographic location. While it is true that the average Soldier is still better educated than the majority of their civilian peers, one cannot ignore the fact that Soldiers accessed in 2006 are less educated than any other annual cohort in the modern era of the all volunteer force.

The degradation in the quality of the wartime recruit increases the risk of diminishing military prestige, making the recruiting environment even more difficult. Although the Army is currently experiencing the most significant degradation to recruit quality, the Marine Corps is beginning to exhibit signs of difficulty in recruiting. While the percentage of new Marines with high school diplomas remains high, the percentage of high quality accessions decreased 3% between 2004 and 2006.⁸³ Fortunately, the impact on the Air Force and Navy is minimal due to their limited supporting roles in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Both services continue to meet recruiting goals and are able to attract and assess high quality Airmen and Sailors.

It is imperative that we carefully analyze and assess the lessons learned of recruiting in a wartime environment to ensure that the nation is prepared to meet military manpower requirements for the next prolonged war. One cannot assume that an all volunteer force enacted in 1973 is sufficient to meet the demands of 2010 and beyond. Today's youth are much different from the youth of 1973. Although they share many similar characteristics, it is important that DoD take into account societal and cultural changes that have occurred in the last four decades - and alter or revise enlistment

enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense.

⁸³ USD-PR, Population Representation in the Military Services (2006), Appendix D.

standards accordingly. Likewise, increasing the end strength for the Army and the Marine Corps will not result in an increase in the quality of new accessions - and may only serve to make an already challenging recruiting environment that much more difficult. When the Gates Commission recommended the creation of an all volunteer force to President Nixon, they included a provision for Congress to enact a standby draft in times of national emergency. The all volunteer force was not intended to meet the demands of prolonged combat operations; OEF and OIF became the first true test of the AVF.

Chapter 4

Societal Trends

Raised by parents who believe in the importance of self-esteem, they consider themselves ready to overcome challenges and leap tall buildings... They expect a learning environment that is challenging, fun, collaborative, and rewarding. Millennials are goal oriented and civic minded. They have a high rate of volunteerism and think in terms of the greater good. Millennials are team players, they expect to learn and work in an environment that is fair to all, where diversity is the norm, and they'll use their collective power if they feel someone is treated unfairly.

-- Dave Coffield⁸⁴

Propensity to Serve

One of the most daunting challenges facing the Department of Defense today is a drastic decrease in the propensity of youths aged 18 to 24 to enlist in the military. In 2002, DoD announced that the propensity to enlist had declined by 3% in the last 10 years, dropping to an all-time low of 29%.⁸⁵ That figure is especially alarming considering the wave of patriotism the country had experienced as a result of the 9-11 attacks. Now, seven years later, with the nation still actively engaged in two wars, the propensity to enlist has declined even further. The last five years has shown a steady decrease in propensity amongst many of the youth populations historically associated with military service – specifically, high school males and African-Americans. Equally

⁸⁴ Dave Coffield is the Director of Public Relations at Hardin-Simmons University; the Millennial Generation is commonly defined as those born between 1980-2000.

⁸⁵ DoD Military Personnel Human Resources Strategic Plan (2002).

important, parents and other influential adults (teachers, coaches, religious leaders...) are less and less likely to recommend military service to today's youth.⁸⁶

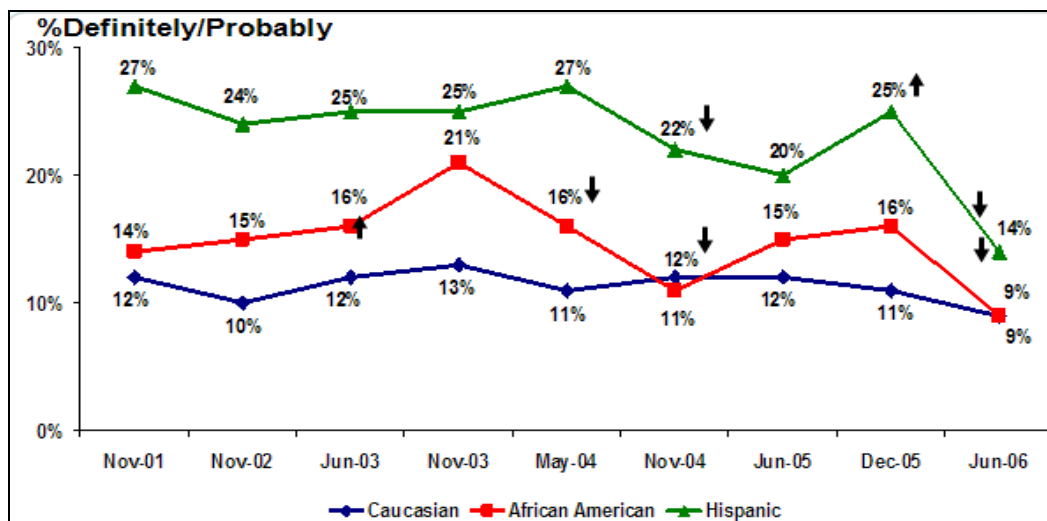


Figure 4-1: DoD Youth Poll, “How likely is it that you will be serving in the Military in the next few years?”⁸⁷

Although American involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq has contributed to the decline in the propensity to serve, it is merely another contributing factor - not the sole or primary reason for the decline. As noted above, less than one third of U.S. youth exhibited any inclination towards military service in 2002. A 2005 DoD study revealed that perceptions about military service have changed. The majority of youth and their parents believed that deployment to either Iraq or Afghanistan was very likely for most service members and that the fear of death and serious injury began to play an increasingly important role in any discussions concerning military service. Slightly more than 66% of youths aged 17 to 21 stated that the current situation with the war on

⁸⁶ CBO (2007), 7.

⁸⁷ Chart extracted from USAREC briefing by COL Renee Finnegan to the Army Reserve G-1 War Council, January 11, 2007, slide 4.

terrorism makes them less likely to join the military (only 28% stated that they were more likely to serve).⁸⁸

Perhaps the most significant societal change affecting propensity is the increase in Americans with college educations. Most studies concerning propensity show a direct correlation between a parent's education level and the propensity of their children to even consider enlistment in the armed forces. Youth with one or more college educated parents are much less likely to consider the military as a viable career option.⁸⁹ The same patterns hold true among individuals with high grades in high school and the accompanying expectation (both personal and imposed by society) that they will obtain a college degree. These high quality individuals are preferred by the armed forces, yet comprise the very population more likely to choose college over military service.

In addition to parental educational attainment levels and academic performance, there are several other societal or demographic factors with a high correlation to both propensity and actual enlistment. The most obvious factor is gender. Although there is a strong correlation within the female population between propensity and actual enlistment, males are two to three times more likely to both consider military service and enlist. Geographic location also plays a significant role in predicting propensity and enlistment. Historical data from the last four decades reveals that young males from Southern and Western states are more likely to enlist than their counterparts from other areas of the country. When it comes to race and ethnicity, the percentage of African-Americans and

⁸⁸ GAO-05-952, Military Demographics, 67.

⁸⁹ Segal, Population Bulletin (2004), 9.

Hispanics serving in the military is higher than their percentage of the U.S. population in general. Several studies imply a link between high enlistment rates of African-Americans and the high percentage of enlistments that come from Southern states. One final factor that has a high correlation with both propensity and enlistment is the number of parents present in the household. Studies have consistently shown that young men with only one parent in the household are much more likely to enlist than those growing up with two parents living at home.⁹⁰

The attitudes, values, and behaviors of today's youth also impact both propensity and actual enlistment rates. When asked to respond to a set of questions concerning the military as an institution and military service in general, answers provided by a sampling of high school students from across the country resulted in several strong correlations between their answers and the likelihood of military service. For example, both propensity and enlistment rates were highest among males who completely agreed that "Soldiers should always obey orders". There are also strong positive correlations with those who viewed the military as an acceptable workplace. Males who exhibited aggressive behavior and frequently engaged in vigorous exercise were also shown to be slightly more inclined towards military service. On the other hand, the study revealed that individuals who judged military service as unacceptable would rarely consider enlistment at a later date. Additionally, individuals desiring the ability to "put down roots in the community" and desiring a job with a high degree of autonomy were less inclined

⁹⁰ GAO 05-952, 81.

towards military service. Smoking, heavy drinking, and marijuana use showed no significant impact on propensity or enlistment.⁹¹

Propensity to serve is a powerful indicator of who will actually enlist into any branch of the armed forces; “by the time young people reached the end of high school, their expectations concerning military service are highly predictive of subsequent behavior.”⁹² The University of Michigan's Monitoring the Future study, conducted annually since 1975, consistently shows that male high school seniors with a high propensity to serve enlist at a 70% rate within five years of high school graduation (and the majority enlist within the first two years) . Although female high school seniors exhibit a much lower propensity to enlist than their male counterparts, those who do express a definite interest in military service consistently enlist at a 40% rate within five years of graduation. The impact is obvious; decreases in propensity to serve will result in decreases in actual enlistments. The Monitoring the Future study has noted a steady decline in the propensity of high school seniors to serve. More concerning, perhaps, is that the study has also noted a consistent decline in the propensity of eighth and 10th grade students since 1991.⁹³

On a last note concerning propensity - it is important to debunk the myth that an increase in patriotism will lead to an increase in military service. Multiple studies conducted, especially in the aftermath of 9-11, showed absolutely no correlation between

⁹¹ Jerald Bachman et al., “Who Chooses Military Service? Correlates of Propensity and Enlistment in the U.S. Armed Forces,” *Military Psychology* (December 2000), 18-26.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹³ Segal, *Population Bulletin* (2004), 9.

an increase in patriotism and an increase in actual military enlistments.⁹⁴ There is anecdotal evidence to support a slight increase in the propensity to serve, however that propensity did not equate to an increase in enlistment. Today's youth are patriotic and exhibit a higher level of volunteerism than at any other point in time since the inception of the all volunteer force. When asked if they consider themselves patriotic, 72% of the Millennial Generation said yes. Unfortunately, 70% also stated that they were unwilling to join the U.S. military.⁹⁵ DoD's challenge is to find a new and innovative way to harness that patriotism and volunteer spirit, with a resulting increase in enlistments.

Qualifications to Serve

Further exasperating recruiting challenges resulting from a decreased propensity to serve, is the distressing statistic that 50-70% of the nation's youth are unqualified for military service. In 2005, DoD estimated that more than 50% of American youth aged 16 to 21 did not meet the minimum enlistment standards, with more than half of that population disqualified as a result of a medical or physical condition.⁹⁶

A look at the 2007 recruiting market by the U.S. Army revealed that only 28.6% of the youth population aged 17 to 24 was fully qualified for military service while another 16.9% would require a medical or moral waiver in order to serve. The remaining 54.5% of the population was permanently disqualified from service as a result of medical

⁹⁴ USAAC Brief, 5.

⁹⁵ Peter Leyden and Ruy Teixeira. "The Progressive Politics of the Millennial Generation", New Politics Institution (June 21, 2007), http://www.newpolitics.net/node/360?full_report=1 (accessed February 22, 2009), 9.

⁹⁶ Government Accountability Office, Military Personnel: Reporting Additional Servicemember Demographics Could Enhance Congressional Oversight (2005), Report 05-952, 54 & 74.

conditions (19.8%) or due to misconduct / being overweight / or having too many dependents (34.7%). The Army, similar to all of the other services, further defines the recruiting market in terms of: (1) the potential market, (2) the target market, and (3) the prime market. Those individuals deemed fully qualified or eligible with a waiver comprise the potential market. The target market consists of the potential market minus individuals scoring at the CAT IV level on ASVAB or who lack a high school diploma. The prime market, which is the primary area of focus for all recruiters, consists solely of males who possess a high school diploma and scored at the CAT IIIA level or above on ASVAB. Figure 4-2 provides a graphical representation of the recruiting markets for 2007.

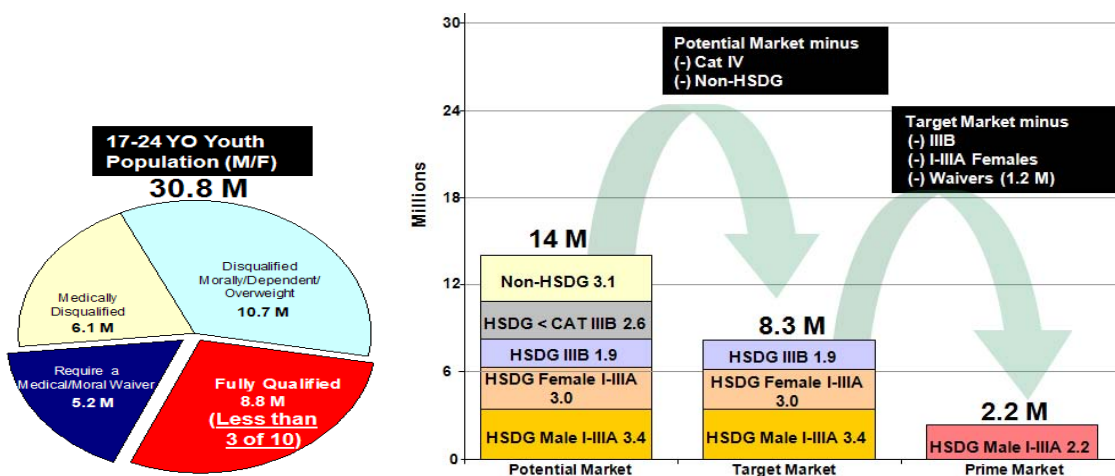


Figure 4-2: Refining the DoD Recruiting Market for FY2007⁹⁷

The percentage of American youth that are qualified for military service continues on a slow and steady decline. The data released by the Army in 2007 has changed very little in 2009. Lieutenant General Freakley, Commander of U.S. Army Accessions

⁹⁷ Chart extracted from USAREC briefing by COL Renee Finnegan to the Army Reserve G-1 War Council, January 11, 2007, slide 15.

Command (USAAC), stated in February 2009 that recruiting is “a challenging environment” where, on average, 70% of 17 to 24-year-olds are disqualified from serving. Specifically, he listed education and health as the two most significant challenges to recruiting. While the national high school graduation rate is approximately 70%, it is significantly lower for African-Americans (58%) and Hispanics (54%) - two groups that historically exhibit a higher propensity for service. Health challenges primarily focus on obesity, weight related issues, and prescription drug use.⁹⁸

General Trends

In addition to the previous discussion concerning propensity and eligibility for military service, is critical to take a look at societal trends as they relate to DoD's categorizations of quality. The remainder of this chapter will focus on relevant trends found within the same four categories used by the Department of Defense to determine eligibility for enlistment -- general, aptitude, moral conduct, and medical. The first category of general trends will focus in on the state of the economy as it relates to military recruiting, anticipated population and demographic shifts within the next 20 years, and changes within the context of marriage and family.

State of the Economy

An analysis of historical trends proves that the state of the U.S. economy has a powerful impact on military recruiting; high civilian unemployment is associated with

⁹⁸ Michelle Tan. “Army Close to Meeting End Strength Goal,” Army Times (February 23, 2009): 24-25.

higher enlistment rates.⁹⁹ As the economy settles into a recession, and jobs become scarcer, recruiting becomes less challenging. For the first time in four years, all active-duty and reserve forces met recruiting goals in 2008. The first four months of fiscal year 2009 mark the strongest recruiting effort in the last five years. At the end of January, all services and all components were ahead of their annual recruiting goals. Most impressive are the 2009 year-to-date recruiting statistics for the active component Army and Marine Corps. While both services have struggled over the last several years to meet recruiting goals, the Army (105.6%) and the Marine Corps (107.7%) have exceeded recruiting goals every month for the first four months of fiscal year 2009.¹⁰⁰

Even more intriguing is the fact that as the civilian unemployment rate increases there is a corresponding increase in the quality of military applicants. This fact can be proven by a quick analysis of military quality indicators and unemployment rates during the last two decades. In the early 1990s the civilian unemployment rate among 16-19 year olds increased from 15% in 1990 to more than 20% in 1992. At the same time, DoD saw an unprecedented jump in the percentage of enlistments considered to be high quality from 57% at the beginning of the decade to an unprecedented all-time high of 73% by the end of 1992. However, when civilian unemployment rates for the same group drastically declined to 13% in 1999, DoD experienced a corresponding drop in the quality of its enlistments. By 1999, the percentage of high-quality enlistments for DoD dropped below 60% for the first time since 1990, bottoming out at 57.3% in 2000. A decade later, as

⁹⁹ GAO 05-952, 83.

¹⁰⁰ Compilation of DoD News Releases Announcing Recruiting and Retention Numbers (October 2008 – January 20 09)

Operation Iraqi Freedom began, the civilian unemployment rate for 16 to 19-year-olds increased to 18% in 2003. Proving, once again, that an increase in unemployment rates will result in a corresponding increase in DoD quality enlistments, the percentage of enlistments categorized as high quality jumped by almost 10 percentage points to 66.7% by the end of 2004.

Although recruiting efforts and the quality of individuals enlisting are showing significant improvements during the last 12 months, it is critical to understand the causal link between civilian unemployment and military recruiting. Recruiters from all branches of service are reporting an increase in inquiries about military service, with much of the interest generated by individuals who have recently lost jobs or individuals who can no longer afford college plans because of the difficulty in obtaining financial aid.¹⁰¹ As the economy begins to improve, military recruiting will once again become more challenging. For that reason alone, DoD cannot afford to forget the recruiting and accession difficulties experienced during 2004-2007. Dr. Curtis Gilroy, who serves as the director for accessions policy within OSD, urged Congress not to forget the lessons of the mid-80s and late 90s when a weakened economy eased the burden on military recruiting and resulted in subsequent budget cuts to recruiting programs:

These lessons from the past showed us it is easy and quick to cut budgets during times when recruiting... [is] successful. But we also learned from those lessons of the past how difficult and how time-consuming and how expensive it is when we need to ramp up when recruiting... failed as a result of those budget cuts.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Lizette Alvarez. "More Americans Joining Military As Jobs Dwindle", New York Times (January 19, 2009), <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/19/us/19recruits.html?> (accessed February 21, 2009)

¹⁰² Donna Miles, "Officials Urge Congress to Protect Recruiting, Retention Incentives", American Forces Press Service News Articles (March 3, 2009).

Age & Gender -- U.S. Population Growth

The previously discussed decrease in propensity for military service among America's youth, coupled with the fact that less than 30% of that population is fully qualified for military service, mandates a look at U.S. population projections. In theory, drastic population increases in the male, under 18 years of age category could offset the decreases in both propensity and qualification for military service. Unfortunately, the U.S. Census Bureau does not predict any significant increase in the number of 18 to 24-year-olds until 2025. Until then, population projections show a slight decrease in 2010 (estimate 30.7 million), followed by a period of stagnation in 2015 (30.9 million) and 2020 (30.8 million), until the increase in 2025 (32.6 million). The Census Bureau also projects a .8% decline in the percentage of male youths between 2010 and 2025.¹⁰³ Given those projections, the size of the prime recruiting market for DoD will decrease by approximately 20,000 men between now and 2020. That is a low end estimate, since it is highly unlikely that all other factors (related to permanent disqualifications) will remain constant during that same period of time.

Marriage & Dependents

Society has seen the definition of family redefined, both in terms of marriage and family composition. Fewer Americans are getting married and they are waiting longer to do so. The percentage of married males has decreased from 67% in 1970 to 56% in 2007, while the average age at marriage during the same period has increased from 22

¹⁰³ U.S. Census Bureau. "Projections of the Population by Selected Age Groups and Sex for the United States: 2050", NP2008-T2 (August 14, 2008).

years of age to just shy of 28 years. The trends are very similar for women; where the percentage of married women has decreased from 62% in 1970 to 53% in 2007, and the average age at marriage has increased from 20 years to just shy of 26 years.¹⁰⁴

More critical perhaps, especially in terms of DoD's enlistment standards, is that the percentage of children (defined as an individual under the age of 18) living with just one parent has changed drastically since the inception of the all volunteer force. In 1970, only 10% of children lived with one parent. By 2004, that number had increased almost threefold, rising to 27%. Although the majority of children living with just one parent reside with their mother, the number of children being raised by a single father account for more than 3% of the population. An additional 3.5% of children live in households with two unmarried parents. That brings the total percentage of children living with a single or two unmarried parents to 29.4% of the population. Of interest, only 58% of children today live with both biological parents who are married to each other.¹⁰⁵ Further exasperating matters, 37% of children born in 2007 were born to unwed mothers.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. "Current Population Survey; Annual Social and Economic Supplements", Fertility and Family Statistics Branch (July 2008).

¹⁰⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. "Majority of Children Live with Two Biological Parents", Broadcast Release CB08-30 (February 20, 2008).

¹⁰⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Health, United States, 2007, With Chartbook on Trends in the Health of Americans", DHHS Publication 2007-1232 (November 2007), 143.

Aptitude Trends

Educational Attainment & Aspirations

As discussed earlier, the percentage of 18 to 24-year-olds within the United States who possess a high school diploma has remained constant since the Bureau of Labor first started tracking this statistic in 1977. In the last 30 years the national average has ranged between 78-80%, with the highest reported average occurring in 2006 at 80.7%.¹⁰⁷ The Bureau of Labor Statistics differs slightly from those normally referenced by DoD officials, since the Bureau of Labor statistics include individuals with both a high school diploma or equivalent alternative credential (such as a GED). DoD and service officials are primarily focused on individuals with a high school diploma, resulting in the often-stated statistic that 70% of the 17 to 24-year-old population meets this requirement. Of significance to DoD recruiting efforts are the facts that (1) a larger proportion of women than men complete high school, (2) educational attainment levels for Whites and Asians are higher than that of Blacks and Hispanics, and (3) individuals residing in Southern and Western states have a lower high school graduation rates than the rest of the country.¹⁰⁸

Over the past 25 years, the percentage of high school graduates going directly on to college has increased from about 50% to more than 70%.¹⁰⁹ Today, college is overwhelmingly the preferred post-high school choice for both students and their parents

¹⁰⁷ USD-PR, Population Representation in the Military Services (2006), Appendix D.

¹⁰⁸ Sarah R. Crissey. "Educational Attainment in the United States: 2007", U.S. Census Bureau (January 2009).

¹⁰⁹ Kapp (CRS), 7.

- it is a desired societal norm. The adage within U.S. culture is that if you can go to college, you will go to college. Any choice to the contrary results in a social stigma.¹¹⁰ An example of that is the emphasis that President Obama and his newly elected administration have placed on education, “We need to put a college education within reach of every American. That's the best investment we can make in our future.”¹¹¹ The most recent studies conducted show that more than 90% of 10th graders expect to attend college, and approximately 78% of high school seniors actually will enroll in college by 2010.¹¹² Additionally, the number of high school graduates in the United States is expected to level off in 2010 - after a 15-year climb - and decline until 2015. This is expected to result in a decrease in college applications, making it easier for students who want to go to college to get accepted.¹¹³ Although 70% of American youth will enroll in college immediately upon completion of high school, statistics also reveal that approximately 1/3 of those who enroll will drop out after the first year.¹¹⁴

Educational Attainment & Earnings Potential

Another factor influencing an individual's decision on whether to attend college after high school or immediately enter the workforce is the ever widening pay gap between those workers with postsecondary education and a high school diploma. As the

¹¹⁰ USAAC Brief, 9.

¹¹¹ Barack Obama, Reclaiming the American Dream Speech, Bettendorf, IA, 11/7/07

¹¹² Data derived from multiple sources including ACT, Inc and the National Center for Education Statistics.

¹¹³ Alan Finder, Math Suggests College Frenzy Will Soon Ease, NY Times (March 9, 2008), http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/09/education/09admissions.html?_r=1 (accessed February 8, 2009)

¹¹⁴ GAO 05-952, 83.

pay gap continues to widen, the percentage of the U.S. population attending college continues to rise.¹¹⁵ The latest data reveals that a high school graduate in 2007 earned an average of \$604 per week, while an individual possessing a bachelor's degree earned \$987 - resulting in an annual incentive of almost \$20,000 to obtain that degree.¹¹⁶

For those individuals selecting to enter the workforce immediately after high school, the military provides a comparable financial incentive. An unmarried E3, stationed within the continental United States, with one year of creditable service can anticipate an average annual salary of \$35,100 (which includes base pay, housing allowance and subsistence); once tax incentives and benefits are included, the annual compensation increases to \$37,800.¹¹⁷ Conversely, the average male with a high school diploma and a one year of experience can anticipate an annual civilian salary of \$31,400. Unfortunately, the risk to reward ratio greatly favors civilian employment. The perception of today's youth is that the risks associated with the military service far outweigh the possible rewards - even when the financial incentives are comparable or greater than civilian opportunities.

Conduct & Moral Trends

As discussed previously, DoD's conduct policy centers around the underlying assumption that applicants who possess good moral character will be less likely to

¹¹⁵ CBO (2007), 15.

¹¹⁶ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections - Education Pays, <http://www.bls.gov/emp/emptab7.htm> (accessed January 10, 2009)

¹¹⁷ Office of the Secretary of Defense, Regular Military Compensation Calculator, <http://www.defenselink.mil/militarypay/mpcalcs/Calculators/RMC.aspx> (accessed February 21, 2009)

become disruptive or pose a security risk. Unfortunately, this policy has come under attack in recent years due to the increased number of conduct / moral waivers granted by DoD, and more specifically the Army. In 2007, the Army alone granted conduct waivers to 511 individuals convicted of a felony, more than doubling the waivers granted in 2006 (249). However, the Army wasn't the only branch of service approving conduct waivers for individuals with felony convictions. The Marine Corps approved 350 waivers in 2007, a 70% increase from 2006 (208). The Navy experienced a slight decrease in the number of waivers, approving 48 in 2006 and 42 in 2007. The Air Force was the only branch of service without a conduct waiver for a felony conviction.

A review of the data provided by the Army and the Marine Corps for 2007 shows some consistent trends throughout the services – and one stark difference. For both services, convictions for either burglary or grand larceny comprised the majority of waivers granted (52% for the Marine Corps and 32% for the Army). Additionally, both services approved a significant percentage of waivers to individuals convicted of aggravated assault (13% for the Marine Corps and 8% for the Army). The one drastic difference was the service philosophy on approving waivers for those convicted of wrongful possession or use of a narcotic or other habit-forming drug (to include marijuana). The Marine Corps granted no waivers for narcotics use or possession, while the Army granted 25% of its waivers in 2007 to those convicted of narcotics possession or use.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Data provided by each service on an annual basis to DoD as required by DoD policy.

The trends in society concerning conduct are sometimes difficult to apply evenly over the past few decades. One reason for the difficulty is that state and local jurisdictions are constantly altering or revising legal definitions, creating a situation in which the same act may result in a felony conviction today that was previously treated as a misdemeanor (or handled outside of the judicial system). This is especially true for any incident occurring on school grounds. Many states have recently altered their laws making it a felony to possess a weapon on school grounds. Further complicating matters, each state has a different definition of what constitutes a weapon. All state definitions include firearms, while some states also identify small knives, martial arts devices and homemade slingshots as weapons. The variations in legal definitions often create a situation in which the same act results in a felony conviction in one state and a misdemeanor in another. Even though all empirical evidence points to a decline in school violence over the last decade, parents' perception of schools as dangerous places increased from 24% in 1977 to almost 80% by the beginning of this century.¹¹⁹

In a 2008 DoD press briefing Major General Bostick, commander of the United States Army Recruiting Command, provided an example of an act that less than 10 years ago would not have been categorized as a felony. He told the story of a 25-year-old female who received a conduct waiver for a felony conviction of aggravated assault. She was involved in an altercation at the age of 18 with another woman in which she took her shoe off and hit the woman. That act alone, of using the shoe as a weapon, resulted in the conviction. At the time of her enlistment, seven years after the conviction, the woman

¹¹⁹ Department of Health and Human Services. "Youth Violence: a Report of the Surgeon General", <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/chapter2/sec12.html#school> (accessed on February 22, 2009).

was married with children and had completed several years of college.¹²⁰ This is just one example of the “whole person” concept used by the services when making a determination on whether or not to approve a conduct waiver.

Medical & Physical Trends

Obesity & Weight Related Medical Conditions

Perhaps the most significant medical trend affecting medical qualification for military service is the increase in the number of American youth who are classified as overweight or obese. Although considered a temporary medical disqualification, exceeding weight or body fat limits has been the leading cause of disqualification at the MEPS for the last six years. A secondary medical trend is the increase in weight related medical issues such as childhood diabetes, musculoskeletal issues, and decreases in bone mass. Although it is impossible for the military to directly impact the national obesity epidemic, “the military has now become one of a long list of stakeholders in this unfortunate and worsening public health issue.”¹²¹

Although the statistics vary slightly depending on the source, there is general agreement that levels of obesity have increased between 300-400% since the inception of the all volunteer force. A 2007 report on the health of the nation by the Center for Disease Control stated that the percentage of overweight children, 6-11 years of age, had

¹²⁰ DoD Press Briefing, Dr. Chu with the Commanders of the Armed Forces Recruiting Commands, October 10, 2008.

¹²¹ Grover K. Yamane. “Obesity in Civilian Adults: Potential Impact on Eligibility for U.S. Military Enlistment”, *Military Medicine*, volume 172 (November 2007), 1164.

increased from 4% in 1971 to almost 18% in 2004. The statistics for adolescents, 12-19 years of age, identified an increase from 6% in 1971 to 17% in 2004.¹²²

A study conducted between 2001-2004, reveals an even bleaker picture of the impact that the obesity epidemic is having on DoD recruiting efforts. This study compared civilian subjects within the enlistment age, 17-42, to service specific regulations determining weight limits for enlistment. It is important to first note that each service is responsible for establishing enlistment weight standards for its members. Out of the four branches of service, the Air Force is the only service that uses the same weight tables for both men and women. Each of the other services identifies gender specific requirements based on age.

The results of the study varied greatly when applied to service specific standards. Depending on the branch of service and the age of the individual, overweight rates ranged from 18% to 54% for men and from 21% to 55% for women. A comparison of service specific weight standards revealed that, for men, the Air Force was the most restrictive and the Marine Corps the least restrictive. For women, however, the Army was the most restrictive and the Air Force the least restrictive. The dichotomy regarding the Air Force standards is a reflection of their choice to use one standard for both genders. The results also consistently recognized that weight increases with age and that women are more likely to be overweight than their male counterparts in the same age group. Although an analysis of race showed no significant difference among men, African-American and Mexican-American women were much likelier to be overweight

¹²² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Health, United States, 2007, With Chartbook on Trends in the Health of Americans", DHHS Publication 2007-1232 (November 2007), 292.

than their Caucasian counterparts. Although the prevalence of obesity varied by state and region, individuals from Southern states were more likely to be overweight - a significant finding given that more than 42% of annual accessions are recruited from southern states.¹²³ As obesity rates continue to increase in the civilian population, the impact on the nation's military forces cannot be understated. Recruiting will become more and more challenging as more and more of America's youth are ineligible for military service. The military also faces the unintended consequence of decreasing ethnic and cultural diversity within the ranks, particularly in terms of African-American and Mexican-American women.

Hearing Loss & the iPod Generation

Between 1995-2004, hearing deficiency was the most common condition for which accession medical waivers were granted, accounting for more than 10% of all medical waivers across DoD.¹²⁴ In 2006, hearing deficiency was the fourth most common disqualifying condition among active-duty applicants at the MEPS.¹²⁵ Throughout society, hearing loss is increasing rapidly in children and young adults. Estimates of noise induced hearing loss in children aged 6-19 ranged from 13% of the population (Center for Disease Control) to more than 16% (Oregon Health and Science University). When asked to self identify symptoms of hearing loss, more than 50% of high school students reported at least one symptom in 2006. Equally alarming is the fact

¹²³ Yamane, 1162.

¹²⁴ David W. Niebuhr. "Attrition of U.S. Military Enlistees with Waivers for Hearing Deficiency, 1995-2004", *Military Medicine*, volume 172 (January 2007), 63.

¹²⁵ Accession Medical Standards Analysis and Research Activity (AMSARA). "Report of 2007 Attrition and Morbidity Data for 2006 Accessions" (August 2008), 61.

that young people discount hearing loss as a serious danger. Not only does noise induced hearing loss potentially render an individual medically ineligible for military service, research has revealed that children suffering from unilateral hearing loss are 10 times more likely to experience academic problems in school.¹²⁶

Of little surprise, there is a positive correlation found between prolonged MP3 use and noise induced hearing loss. Unlike the first generation portable audio devices (the Walkman or CD player), today's MP3 players pose a new danger. These devices can hold thousands of songs and play for hours without needing to be recharged. Dubbed the iPod generation, it is not uncommon for today's youth to listen to their mp3 players for hours at a time at volume levels far exceeding safe levels. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) states that risk of hearing loss begins when audio levels exceed 85 decibels (dB). As part of an informal study, a professor at Wichita State University identified students using mp3 players then asked them to remove their headphones so that he could measure sound levels. His findings revealed that the typical listening level approached 120 dB – an exposure level that can lead to hearing damage in less than eight minutes.¹²⁷

A study commissioned by DoD and conducted by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, examined all active-duty enlistees (6,000+) who received a medical waiver for hearing deficiency between 1995-2004. Hearing is a significant concern for the military services since excessive noise induced hearing loss can affect performance and

¹²⁶ Dee N. Shafer. "Noise induced hearing loss hits teens", The ASHA Leader, (April 11, 2006), 27.

¹²⁷ Gregory Mott. "The iPod and the Fury", the Washington Post (January 17, 2006), <http://www.washingtonpost.com> (accessed February 22, 2009).

retainability. Overall, the study found that the Army approved waivers for individuals with hearing deficiencies at a much greater rate than the other services - almost twice as often as the Navy and three times more frequently than the Marine Corps. The number of waivers granted by the Air Force was extremely low (only 78 approved waivers during the 10-year period), and proved statistically insignificant for study. The study also identified that those receiving a waiver were generally “more male, older, and more Caucasian” than the general accession population.¹²⁸

Antidepressants & Prescription Drug Use

Depression and psychological disorders accounted for almost 3% of applicants receiving permanent medical disqualifications in 2006. Only weight, drug abuse, vision, hearing, joint disorders and asthma were more prevalent reasons for medical disqualification from service.¹²⁹ Research released in December 2008 revealed that one in five college-aged adults, 19-25, has a personality disorder severe enough to interfere with everyday life. Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), antisocial behaviors, and paranoia were the most frequently diagnosed personality disorders within this group. OCD was diagnosed at a rate of 12% for this population, although OCD affects only 2% of the population at large.¹³⁰ Although some experts believe that there is a tendency to over diagnose personality disorders, the trend is nonetheless alarming and significant.

In 2006, 18% of boys and 11% of girls, aged 4-17, were considered to be

¹²⁸ David W. Niebuhr. “Attrition of U.S. Military Enlistees with Waivers for Hearing Deficiency, 1995–2004”, *Military Medicine*, volume 172 (January 2007), 63.

¹²⁹ AMSARA Annual Report 2007, 62.

¹³⁰ Lindsey Tanner. “One in Five Young Adults Has Personality Disorder”, *Archives of General Psychiatry* (December 1, 2008), <http://www.archgenpsychiatry.com> (accessed February 21, 2009).

suffering from emotional or behavioral difficulty to the extent that their parents sought medical advice from either a health care provider or school staff. Approximately 5-6% of children were put on medication for symptoms (concentration, hyperactivity, impulsivity) commonly associated with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); boys were twice as likely as girls to be prescribed medications.¹³¹ The rate at which children are prescribed medication to treat depression or ADHD constitutes a 300% increase in the last 10 years.¹³² This uptick in mental health associated diagnosis and prescription drug use amongst children will further challenge military recruiting efforts in the future.

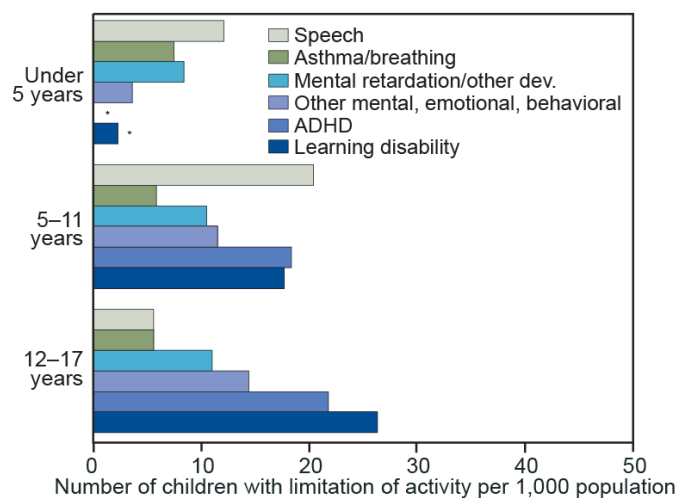


Figure 4-3: Limitation of activity caused by selected chronic health conditions among children, by age: United States, 2004-2005¹³³

¹³¹ Gloria A. Simpson et al. "Use of Mental Health Services in the Past 12 Months by Children Aged 4-17 Years: United States, 2005-2006", National Center for Health Statistics, NCHS data brief No. 8 (September 2008).

¹³² GAO 05-952, 74-75.

¹³³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Health, United States, 2007, With Chartbook on Trends in the Health of Americans", DHHS Publication 2007-1232 (November 2007), 43.

Chapter 5

The Way Ahead – Manning the Force in 2020

For enlisted personnel we aim to be Lake Wobegon... we aim the typical person to be “above average”... we aim to be above average in terms of the mean and where the whole distribution is skewed to the high-end of key abilities in terms of what an American youth can do.

-- Dr. David Chu

Why Act? Why Now?

A common understanding and acceptance among national security professionals is that the type of combat operations the U.S. military is currently waging in Iraq and Afghanistan are indicative of the types of conflicts that the U.S. military will be asked to fight for decades to come. Directly related to that assumption is the need to not only maintain, but strengthen, the all volunteer force. The current operational tempo is unsustainable with the current force structure. The degradation and recruit quality experienced by the Army, and to a lesser degree the Marine Corps, must be reversed if the all volunteer force is to remain viable. It is critical to remember that the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines recruited during the past five years are the senior noncommissioned officers and mid grade officers of tomorrow. The effects of even a short-term degradation in accessions quality can take upwards of a decade to reverse or eradicate from the force; “without a robust ability to bring new members into the

military, [DoD]... lacks a sufficient pool of entry-level personnel to develop into the mid-level and upper-level leaders of the future.”¹³⁴

Members of Congress have acknowledged the challenges associated with military recruiting, and understand that recruiting shortfalls could negatively impact the ability of the nation to provide for its national security. Congress has several traditional policy levers that they have historically used to address challenges in military recruiting, all of which have centered on an increase in funding. Some of the more common levers used by Congress include: increasing funding for advertising, increasing the number of recruiters, and providing larger enlistment bonuses.¹³⁵ The concern, however, is that the current economic crisis will cause Congress to decrease military recruiting budgets - and possibly lead to an even further decline in the quality of the AVF. This concern is addressed by the House Armed Services Committee in their current oversight plan:

Although the downturn in the national economy and a reduction in the level of violence associated with the war in the Republic of Iraq may cause the recruiting environment to become more favorable for the services, there is little reason to believe that recruiting will become measurably easier given continued societal pressure to attend college, a youth population has been found to be increasingly unqualified for military service, and the defense budget that will be highly stressed to be able to meet requirements.¹³⁶

In the absence of funding for traditional Congressional levers designed to ease the burden on military recruiting, it is more important than ever to carefully examine current enlistment standards in order to determine if they are the right standards, at the right time,

¹³⁴Lawrence Kapp, Congressional Research Services, Recruiting and Retention: An Overview of FY2005 and FY2006 Results for Active and Reserve Component Enlisted Personnel (2006), 1.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹³⁶ United States House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, 111th Congress, Oversight Plan.

necessary to recruit the right military force. This paper will now turn its' focus towards initiatives currently underway within the Department of Defense that could increase the quality of military recruits while potentially easing the burden on recruiters. In addition to those initiatives, recommendations will be made to alter the current enlistment standards established by Title 10 of the U.S. Code and DoD policy. Finally, several other options and initiatives within the recruiting environment will be presented for consideration.

DoD & Service-Specific Initiatives

Given the difficulties that DoD has experienced in the last several years with regards to its recruiting efforts, it is no surprise that the services have all conducted their own analysis on how they can expand the recruiting pool and increase the quality of new recruits. Within DoD, the Army's recruiting challenges have been the greatest - and have resulted in the Army taking the lead on several initiatives designed to improve recruit quality. The following section will outline two of the Army's most significant initiatives in the areas of education and obesity, and will include a DoD wide initiative to expand eligibility to a select group of noncitizens.

The Army Prep School

As discussed previously, DoD experienced a 25-year low when the percentage of high school diploma accessions declined to 87% in 2006. This decline was primarily the consequence of the Army's recruiting results in 2006 when only 73% of new Soldiers enlisted with a high school diploma. Although DoD often cites the fact that only 70% of the 17 to 24-year-old population possesses a high school diploma, that statistic has

remained relatively stagnant since the inception of the AVF. Therefore, the inability to recruit individuals with a high school diploma has not been hampered by any corresponding societal trend - and must be a reflection of the steadily decreasing propensity to serve and the nations' protracted involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In 2008, the Army decided to activate an active-duty company at Fort Jackson, South Carolina with the sole mission of academically training new recruits to receive their GED prior to starting basic training. This unit receives young men and women who are otherwise eligible for enlistment but do not possess a high school diploma or alternative credential. Additionally, these individuals must not require a waiver of any type for enlistment and must score above the 50th percentile (CAT IIIA) on the AFQT. These are the same individuals who would otherwise be classified as high quality if they possessed a high school diploma. Soldiers entering this program have four weeks to train for, test, and receive their GED. By exception, a two-week extension can be granted for those Soldiers who have not successfully tested but are showing considerable progress. These Soldiers begin basic training after receipt of their GED or are immediately discharged if they fail to receive a GED.

The Army Preparatory School (APS), activated in May of 2008, received its first Soldiers in August of 2008. The first four months of the program have been very successful. The APS trained 930 Soldiers from October 08 through January 09; 89% male with an average AFQT score of 63. The program-to-date graduation rate is 96%. Of those do not complete the program, only 1% of the attrition is for academic reasons; the rest are discharged for medical or conduct reasons. APS is scheduled to receive 2,880

Soldiers during the first year.¹³⁷ If attrition remains at or below the 4% level the Army can expect to add 2,700+ Soldiers to its ranks that would have otherwise been ineligible for enlistment.

Army Prep School / High School Diploma Program.

If the Army Preparatory School continues its success, it will set the conditions for expansion both in terms of physical size and academic output. TRADOC is currently looking to expand their current APS structure from a company sized unit to a battalion and from a GED producing organization to one that can award a high school diploma. This program would allow the Army to continue to recruit 10% of non-high school graduates. Admission standards for this program would be similar to those outlined above for the current APS. Additionally, neither program will accept an individual who dropped out of high school less than nine months before signing an enlistment contract. That requirement is to eliminate any perception that the Army is encouraging men and women to drop out of high school. In its current form, this program is designed to be eight weeks in duration, with class loads of 30 to 60 Soldiers at a time, and an anticipated annual throughput of 1440 Soldiers. Estimated inception date is 1 October 2009.¹³⁸

The Army Fitness Improvement Training Company.

In addition to trying to improve the aptitude quality of new recruits, the Army is also looking into ways to combat the obesity epidemic that is engulfing this nation. As discussed earlier, almost 20% of adolescents in this nation are considered obese. A study

¹³⁷ Army Prep School Expansion at Fort Jackson, IPR Slides Pre-Decisional (4 Feb 09).

¹³⁸ Ibid.

commissioned to determine the impact of the obesity epidemic on DoD recruiting efforts revealed that anywhere from 18% to 55% of men and women do not meet service specific accessions standards for weight. Specifically within the Army the study revealed that 37% of men and 53% of women (civilians of enlistment age) are considered overweight for enlistment.¹³⁹

As a result, the Army is looking into activating a fitness improvement training company at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. This concept, while novel in its approach, is still in its infancy. Current discussions center on the lack of clearly defined entrance criteria. The primary question is whether or not this program is designed for new Soldiers who are “over-fat” or “under-fit”. The TRADOC Surgeon recently directed that the entrance criteria must revolve around only one of the two options; the health risks are too high to consider an applicant who is both “over-fat” and “under-fit”. Although this program is still in the conceptual stage, it is a clear indication of how far the services are willing to go in order to offset societal trends that are damaging to military recruiting efforts. Another approach to solving this dilemma could merely be to increase accession specific weight tables. However, the TRADOC Surgeon shared that past attempts by the Army to expand allowable percentage of body fat was rejected by operational units.¹⁴⁰

DoD Pilot - Non-Citizen Eligibility

Statutory language contained in Title 10 allows the Secretary of Defense the authority to waive citizenship requirements when vital to the national interest. In

¹³⁹ Yamane, 1162.

¹⁴⁰ Army Prep School IPR slides.

December of 2008, DoD announced a pilot program aimed at allowing non-citizens without a green card to enlist in critical skills areas. Currently, aliens lawfully admitted for permanent residence (i.e. possess a green card) are eligible for enlistment. This temporary program would allow enlistment of other visa holders legally in the U.S., particularly individuals with expertise in health care fields or who are fluent in select foreign languages. Non-citizens have been a significant part of the U.S. Armed Forces since the nation's birth, serving in the military since the Revolutionary War. Each year, approximately 8,000 green card holders enlist to serve their adopted country. The initiative announced by DoD "expands non-citizen eligibility for military service to include not only the green card holders, but also those visa holders legally present in the U.S., such as doctors, nurses, and students."¹⁴¹ Although this program is limited in scope, successes may lend credibility to several initiatives currently under development to expand noncitizen eligibility.

Recommended Changes to Current Enlistment Standards

In addition to the service specific initiatives outlined above, there are several changes to the current enlistment standards that must occur in order to ensure the viability of the AVF. These recommendations include changes to DoD policy as well as changes to statutory requirements found in Title 10 of the U.S. Code. These recommendations are based on an analysis of current standards, recruit demographics since the inception of the AVF, and societal trends. The recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views or current policies of DoD or the services. The recruiting

¹⁴¹ DoD Release, December 9, 2009.
http://www.panhandleparade.com/index.php/mbb/article/pilot_program_enlistment_by_some_legal_aliens_to_be_permitted (accessed on February 8, 2009)

challenges of the last six years have revealed some potential problem areas and corrections must be made now before the lessons of the past are easily misplaced or forgotten.

Enlistment Standards – General

Dependency Status.

A look at recent societal trends in the areas of marriage and family have shown significant changes since the inception of the AVF. The percentage of individuals getting married has decreased by almost 10% since 1970, and 37% of children born in 2005 were born to unwed mothers. Currently DoD policy requires a dependency waiver for any applicant that is married with more than two children under the age of 18 and for any applicant who is single with custody of any child under the age of 18. Although requiring a waiver for unmarried applicants with children is logical, it is less logical to require the same waiver for married applicants. Historically, single parents have a higher first-term attrition rate than those without children due to the hardships often associated with military deployments and the inability to ensure a solid and effective family care plan for those children. However, the same is not true for applicants who are married with children unless both spouses are in the military. As a result, DoD should immediately eliminate the requirement for an enlistment waiver for married applicants with children, unless both parents are military service members. The current policy on single applicants with children should remain in place.

Age.

In 2006 Title 10 of the U.S. Code was amended to increase the maximum age for enlistment from 35 to 42. However, only the Army has taken advantage of the change to the maximum age standard. Service specific regulatory guidance limits the age of enlistment to 27 for the Air Force, 29 for the Marine Corps, and 35 years of age for the Navy.¹⁴² Even though the Army is accepting new recruits for enlist up to 42 years of age, the numbers have been small and relatively insignificant. For example, in fiscal year 2008 less than 500 Army recruits were 40 years of age or older.¹⁴³

Additionally, studies by the Accessions Medical Standards Analysis and Research Activity (AMSARA) show a direct correlation between initial term medical attrition and age. Although many of these older recruits are in good physical condition they still attrit at a higher percentage than their younger counterparts. A study of initial term attrition within active-duty accessions from 2001- 2005 identified that cumulative attrition was the highest for the oldest recruits at each point in time over a two-year period. Individuals older than 30 years of age had a greater than 28% attrition rate within the first two years.¹⁴⁴ Although this study was conducted prior to the change in the maximum enlistment age, it is reasonable to believe that the same attrition patterns identified in recruits over the age of 30 will hold true for those recruits over the age of 35. As a result,

¹⁴² Yamane, 1160.

¹⁴³ Remarks made by MG Bostick, DoD press briefing, October 10, 2008.

¹⁴⁴ AMSARA Annual Report 2007, "Report of 2007 Attrition and Morbidity Data for 2006 Accessions", 94.

Congress should reverse its 2006 amendment and immediately return the maximum enlistment age to 35.

Enlistment Standards – Aptitude

Statutory Revisions

CAT IV Accessions. Title 10 of the U.S. Code currently states that no more than 20% of a given service or accession cohort can consist of individuals scoring between the 10th and 30th percentile on the AFQT (Category IV). This requirement is outdated, having remained stagnant since 1983, and harkens back to the lower standards accepted during conscription in the early years of the all volunteer force. Even the Department of Defense recognizes that the 20% cap is too high, as evidenced by DoD policy establishing the cap at 4%. The last time DoD exceeded the 4% benchmark was in 1989; even during the challenging recruiting environment of the last five years DoD never exceeded 2% of CAT IV accessions in a given year. At a minimum, Congress should immediately amend Title 10 and reestablish the statutory limitation on CAT IV enlistments to no more than 10% of a service or accession cohort - with serious consideration given to lowering the statutory limitation to 5%.

High-School Diplomas. The statutory requirement for a high school diploma was eliminated in 1988, and the current standard is that any person who does not possess a high school diploma must score above the 31st percentile on the AFQT in order to enlist. Studies conducted over the last three decades have all drawn the same conclusion that individuals with a high school diploma are more likely to complete their initial term of

enlistment than those individuals without a high school diploma or who possess alternative credentials (GED, Home schooling...). Likewise, higher individual scores on the AFQT are closely linked to successful performance of duty in the initial term of enlistment. As a result, Congress should immediately amend Title 10 to require a minimum AFQT score of 50 in order to enlist without a high school diploma. Requiring a higher AFQT for those applicants without a high school diploma will help to mitigate or offset initial term attrition. Additionally, the Army specific stipulation in Title 10 allowing up to 35% of Soldiers in a given cohort to enlist without a high school diploma should be eliminated. In its place statutory language should be introduced capping the total number of enlistments without a high school diploma to 20% of a given cohort, which is inclusive of alternative credential holders. This new requirement is still a lesser benchmark than DoD's current policy of 90% for enlistments with high school diplomas. This revision will serve as a compromise between the 1988 statutory language that required all applicants to possess a high school diploma and current language which allows enlistment without a diploma.

Enlistment Standards - Conduct/ Moral

Title 10 currently states that no individual who is intoxicated or convicted of a felony is eligible to enlist. However, statutory language does allow the Secretary of Defense to authorize exceptions for felony convictions in meritorious cases. As previously discussed, there were 903 enlistments in 2007 of individuals convicted of a felony. All branches of service except the Air Force granted a waiver for a felony conviction. While the Army granted the most conduct waivers for felonies (511), the

Marine Corps granted a higher percentage of waivers – almost 1% of its accession cohort accessed with a felony conduct waiver. Although DoD recently attempted to standardize its policy concerning conduct waivers, there is still much discrepancy amongst the services on who or what will qualify for a waiver. Since current statutory language permits the Secretary of Defense to grant waivers for felonies, re-categorizing these offenses into major misconduct or misconduct categories violates the intent of that statutory language. As a result, the office of the Secretary of Defense (in lieu of the services) should become the waiver approval authority for all conduct waivers revolving around a felony conviction or other act deemed a major misconduct by DoD's revised policy. This change not only meets the intent of Title 10, but provides OSD with greater visibility on those most serious offenses being considered for enlistment and ensures impartiality when rendering a final determination on the request for a conduct waiver.¹⁴⁵ Additionally, waivers for major misconduct should be limited to no more than .5% of an accession cohort.

Enlistment Standards – Medical / Physical

Obesity

Not only does each service have a differing service-specific standard for enlistment weight tables, the Air Force currently maintains a standard for weight that is gender neutral and does not adjust for age. Each service claims that its standards are medically validated and consistent with the acceptable norms of weight within the medical community. It is not possible for four separate standards to each be valid and

¹⁴⁵ Office of the Secretary of Defense.

viable, particularly when three services separate standards based on gender and one does not. For example, a 19-year old male who is 5'10" tall cannot exceed 215 pounds and 18% body fat to join the Marines and he cannot exceed 189 pounds and 24% body fat to join the Army. A 19-year old female who is 5'5" tall cannot exceed 142 pounds and 26% body fat to join the Marines and she cannot exceed 165 pounds and 28% body fat to join the Air Force.

In the absence of a current policy governing accession weight standards, DoD should immediately establish a medically validated policy governing the minimum and maximum acceptable weight standards for initial enlistment based on gender and age. Next, DoD should carefully study whether or not weight is a proper screening tool for enlistment. Similar to the concerns raised by the TRADOC Surgeon when discussing the Army's concept for a fitness improvement training company, should DoD's main concern be those applicants who are "overweight" or those who are "under-fit"? Of course there is a causal link between the two that sometimes cannot be separated, but there are also a significant number of individuals who may be overweight but are physically fit and can meet the rigors of military service. Perhaps weight is best used as a screening tool for enlistment - not as a nonnegotiable standard.

Hearing

The increase in noise induced hearing loss within the "iPod Generation" is quickly causing medical disqualifications due to hearing to be a significant concern to DoD - second only to obesity. During 1995-2004, hearing deficiency was the most common condition resulting in the approval of a medical waiver. In 2006 hearing

deficiency was the fourth most common disqualifier for military service behind obesity, marijuana use, and vision disorders. That statistic, when combined with the fact that more than 50% of today's high school students report at least one symptom of hearing loss, seems to indicate that disqualifications resulting from hearing loss will only increase with time. Hearing loss is the second most prevalent cause for Veterans Affairs disability payments and perhaps one of the reasons that DoD has seemingly been reluctant to relax standards or to revise the hearing baseline required for enlistment.¹⁴⁶

However, many of the applicants disqualified for hearing disorders are unaware of their condition until their physical examination at the MEPS. The majority of these individuals have successfully completed high school and engaged in extracurricular activities with no degradation of capability due to their hearing disorder. Many times they are disqualified for conditions that are degenerative in nature and will not manifest until much later in life. It is for these reasons that a brigade commander at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, responsible for the reception and initial processing of more than half the Army's recruits in a given year often elected to retain Soldiers that were identified with otherwise disqualifying hearing conditions.¹⁴⁷ The commander's rationale was that if the individual had made it to this point in their life unaffected by the hearing disorder, and that the disorder was not of a magnitude or severity that would mandate separation within the initial term of enlistment, then the training should bear out the individual's qualifications to serve. In other words, if the individual could successfully complete their

¹⁴⁶ Niebuhr, 63.

¹⁴⁷ The command in question is the 171st Infantry Brigade, Fort Jackson, SC which is the parent organization to the 120th Adjutant General Battalion (Reception). The 120th receives all new Soldiers and completes all military in-processing activities, to include a full medical exam, prior to the Soldier starting basic training.

initial entry training than they should be given a chance to do so. During a 12-month period in 2006-2007, more than 50 Soldiers who were recommended for medical separation as a result of hearing disorder were retained on active duty and allowed to start basic training. Of this population, less than 20% were discharged as result of the hearing condition during basic training.¹⁴⁸ This success, coupled with the increasing percentage of youth that exhibit some symptoms of noise induced hearing loss, mandate that DoD once again relook its policies regarding the baseline audiogram and hearing standards for initial enlistment.

Other Options & Considerations

In addition to the previously discussed service specific initiatives and the recommended changes to statutory law and DoD policy, there are several other programs or initiatives worth discussing. Several of these initiatives have already been looked at by the services and several are new ideas or concepts that are worth exploring. These options include the introduction of a propensity survey to the ASVAB test, amendments to the nation's Selective Service System, identification of college dropouts as a prime recruiting market, and an expansion of programs aimed at enlisting immigrants.

ASVAB Propensity Survey

As discussed earlier, studies and surveys administered over the last three decades to America's youth have shown significant correlations between certain societal and demographic factors (parents education levels, desire for college education, family composition, select attitudes and behaviors) and an increased propensity for military

¹⁴⁸ Statistics were not available as to how many of the same Soldiers completed their Advanced Individual Training (AIT) which is the second phase of the Army's Initial Entry Training.

service. One recommendation to enable DoD and the respective services to take advantage of this data in a timelier manner is to include a short propensity survey either at the beginning or the end of the ASVAB. As part of their educational outreach programs, USMEPCOM often administers the ASVAB to large groups of students at high schools throughout the country then uses the results to provide career counseling options to those same students. Then the respective services use the results as a screening tool to identify qualified individuals for future contact. DoD should revise the administrative section of the ASVAB to include a short survey focused on identifying factors, attitudes, or behaviors closely associated with an increased propensity for service. This would provide each of the services an additional tool to use for screening and prioritizing potential applicants - as opposed to developing call/contact lists based solely on test scores.

Selective Service System

In 1970, the Gates Commission recommended to President Nixon that the national interest would be best served through the abolishment of conscription and the use of an all volunteer force supported by an effective standby draft. Today, the Selective Service System is responsible for maintaining the nation's ability to effectively administer a standby draft when needed. Currently, all men in the U.S. are required to register with Selective Service within 30 days of reaching age 18. Registration is also required of all male immigrants, legal or undocumented, between the ages of 18-25. The only exceptions to the registration policy for men are: (1) those who are already serving in the military, (2) lawful non-immigrants in the country on visas, (3) special agricultural

workers, and (4) those incarcerated, hospitalized, or institutionalized for medical reasons.¹⁴⁹

Registering with Selective Service is intended to “hedge against underestimating the number of active duty and reserve component personnel needed in a future conflict” and to serve as “the last link between society at large and today’s all-volunteer armed forces.”¹⁵⁰ If national security is threatened to the extent that a standby draft is activated, that draft should include all citizens of enlistment age -- not just men. Although a hotly debated topic, selective service registration should be amended immediately to include mandatory registration by both men and women within 30 days of their 18th birthday. This requirement for registration by all women does not advocate for a draft force consisting of 50% men and 50% women. Instead, the Selective Service System will need to amend draft lottery procedures to include a fair and equitable distribution of women throughout the draft. One possible solution would be to draft the same percentage of women that are currently serving on active duty (for example, 15-20%) - maintaining the current gender distribution within the total force.

College Drop-Outs

As discussed in the previous chapter, 70% of American youth will enroll in college immediately upon completion of high school – but 33% of that population will drop out after the first year. This constitutes a rather sizable population, assumed to meet DoD aptitude requirements for enlistment, which could become the focus of targeted

¹⁴⁹ Information obtained from the Selective Service website, <http://www.sss.gov/FSwho.htm> (accessed on February 26, 2009).

¹⁵⁰ Selective Service System, “Fiscal Year 2007 Annual Report to the Congress of the United States”, 1.

recruiting efforts for all branches of service. Although this option does not require a policy change within DoD, it does require further analysis on how to best reach out to the individuals in this prime market category.

Non-Citizen Eligibility

Based on initial successes, there is a possibility to expand the 2008 DoD pilot program aimed at allowing non-citizens without a green card to enlistment in critical skills areas. The current program allows for individuals with expertise in healthcare fields or foreign languages to enlist. Perhaps the next step for this program is to allow enlistment into fields with critical shortages. The initial phase of this expansion should be limited to visa holders legally present in the U.S. who meet the DoD definition of a high quality applicant.

Further expansion could follow a similar program that the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services recently designed for professional athletes. Previously, professional athletes were only allowed to remain in the United States for a period of 10 years. The new policy allows for renewal of a P-1 visa every 10 years as long as the individual leaves the country in order to apply for the new visa. Major League Baseball officials heralded the announcement, concerned that the 10-year limit would put a dent in some of their players' professional careers.¹⁵¹ If the government can grant immigration exceptions for athletes, couldn't a similar program be designed for those individuals willing and desiring to serve in the Armed Forces of the United States?

¹⁵¹ Frederic J. Frommer, "US Extends Stay of Foreign Athletes", Associated Press (March 9, 2009), http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090309/ap_on_go_ot/foreign_athletes_3 (accessed March 10, 2009).

CONCLUSION

I'm confident that we have a very high-quality force. I've been in this Army for over 30 years. I've served side-by-side with these great young men and women in combat. I've never seen a better Army. Our soldiers are serving bravely across the globe. Some of them are paying the ultimate sacrifice, to serve their nation. Each of them became heroes the day they enlisted.

-- Major General Thomas Bostick

In 2008 the Army updated its official strategy document and included the simple, but powerful, message that "...we must maintain the quality and viability of the All-Volunteer Force, the heart and soul of this Army."¹⁵² The last six years have been very challenging for the nation's armed forces. The nation's engagement in two wars has tested both the mettle and viability of the all volunteer force. The challenge has not been easy; today's military, especially the ground forces, find themselves desperately needing the chance to reset and refit the force. However, while national policy debates continue in the nation's capital as to how to successfully draw down combat troops in Iraq and transition those forces and equipment to Afghanistan, the military services quietly continue their recruiting missions – trying to convince our young men and women that service in the military is a rewarding, viable and necessary career choice.

In addition to the nation's wartime footing, today's recruiting challenges are even more complex as result of the human dynamic and societal changes that have occurred since the inception of the all volunteer force. The propensity to enlist amongst high

¹⁵² The Army Strategy, 22 August 2008, publication by the Army G3/5/7.

school students, and even middle school students, is at an all-time low. Although today's young Americans overwhelmingly consider themselves patriotic, less than 30% of the nation's youth exhibit any inclination towards military service. Influencers such as parents, teachers, and clergymen are less inclined to recommend military service today than at any other point in time during the last four decades. Further exasperating military recruiting efforts is the fact that only one third of Americans age 17 to 42 are qualified for military service.

This paper examined DoD's ability to sustain an all volunteer force within the framework of our ever-changing society and the current statutory and regulatory guidelines that define enlistment standards. It sought answers for some of the most common questions surrounding the quality of the current wartime force: (1) has the U.S. military lowered its standards for enlistment, (2) have quality indicators declined against DoD's standards or against society as a whole, (3) what impact have societal trends and cultural shifts within the American population had on DoD's ability to recruit a high-quality force, and (4) what changes need to be made in order to ensure the quality and viability of the All Volunteer Force (AVF)?

The information and data contained in this paper confirms that the US military did indeed lower its standards for enlistment particularly during 2004- 2007. These lower standards were lowered not by changing policy or law, but by allowing a significant number of enlistment waivers and by the services disregarding their own quality benchmarks. Fortunately, the lowering of standards did not occur throughout all branches of service. Instead, the Army and the Marine Corps bore the brunt of the

relaxed enlistment standards - just as those services had shouldered the majority of the burden in fighting two ground wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

However, although DoD did lower its standards for enlistment the military services still continue to attract, recruit, and enlist men and women that outperform their civilian counterparts in terms of educational attainment, aptitude levels, moral conduct, and physical health. Dr. Chu stated during a session in front of the House Armed Services Committee concerning military recruitment that “for enlisted personnel...we aim the typical person to be above average... skewed to the high-end of key abilities in terms of what an American youth can do.” Even with the lowered standards of the last five years, the average recruit is “above average” as compared to society at large.

The societal trends affecting military recruitment have been discussed in depth throughout the course of this paper. A drastic decline in the propensity to serve, a redefinition of the American family, and an alarming obesity epidemic that is sweeping the nation are just a few of the trends that will make military recruiting even more difficult in the future. As more and more Americans find themselves unqualified for military service, DoD must consider whether or not the current standards (especially in the terms of physical and medical qualification) in place are both practical and viable. For example, in terms of the obesity epidemic, is DoD’s objective to field a force that maintains the stereotypical desired appearance of a Soldier, Sailor, Airman, or Marine? Or should the practical goal be to field a force of young men and women that are fully capable of performing their duties and meeting the rigors of military service?

The lessons of the past five years cannot be forgotten if the all volunteer force is to remain viable. Changes must be made to the U.S. Code as well as DoD policy that will help to prevent any future relaxing or lowering of enlistment standards. The most critical changes include revisions to the statutory language governing aptitude standards for enlistment. Congress should immediately amend the U.S. Code to reduce the allowable percentage of AFQT Category IV accessions, as well as reduce the percentage of non-high school diploma holders in any given cohort. Additionally, those individuals who do enlist without a high school diploma should score at or above the 50th percentile on the AFTQT.

The young men and women serving in today's military are an exceptional group, the majority forging their military identity through combat. However, it is unrealistic to expect that the demands of today's forces will suddenly dissipate and allow for a return to the peacetime, predominately garrison military of the 1990s. The professional Soldier is the nation's most respected profession. It is the responsibility of our senior military leaders and policymakers to ensure that standards are in place that allow qualified and willing volunteers to continue to join our ranks. Tomorrow's recruit may not look like the recruit of the last four decades - but as long as he is still as competent, professional, and capable of completing the mission then the all volunteer force will continue to be a viable method of military manpower requirement in defense of our nation.

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BIOGRAPHY

Jennifer Walkawicz, a native of The Plains, Virginia, graduated as a Distinguished Military Graduate and received a Regular Army commission as a Second Lieutenant in the US Army Adjutant General (AG) Corps through the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP).

Major Walkawicz' assignments include: Executive Officer and Platoon Leader for 1st Replacement Company in Yongsan, Korea; Assistant Operations Officer, Test Control Officer and Education Services Specialist for the Lansing Military Entrance and Processing Station (MEPS) in Lansing, Michigan; Plans and Operations Officer and Executive Officer for the Assistant Chief of Staff, G1, Eighth United States Army, Yongsan, Korea; Commander, Company A, 3-13th Infantry Regiment and Brigade S1, 1st Basic Combat Training Brigade, Fort Jackson; Secretary General Staff (SGS), US Army Training Center & Fort Jackson, Battalion S-3, 369th AG Battalion and Instructor / Writer for the AG Captains' Career Course, Fort Jackson; Executive Officer / Military Assistant, Deputy Commanding General (Programs), Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan; and Battalion Executive Officer for the 120th Adjutant General (Reception) Battalion, Fort Jackson, SC.

Major Walkawicz' military schools include the Joint Advanced Warfighting School, Joint Forces Staff College, in Norfolk, VA; the AG Officer Basic and Advanced Courses; the Combined Arms and Services Staff School (CAS3); Human Resources Qualification Course (HR43); Staff & Faculty Instructor Certification Course; and the Psychological Operations Officer Course (Phase 1). Her civilian education includes a B.A. in Criminology Pre-Law from IUP and a M.A. in Human Resource Management from Webster University.

Her awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with three oak leaf clusters, Joint Services Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal with one oak leaf cluster and Army Achievement Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters. Her campaign and service medals include: National Defense Medal with Bronze Star, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with two campaign stars, NATO Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Korean Defense Service Medal, Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal, and Overseas Service Ribbon with Numeral 3.

Major Walkawicz is married to Timothy Walkawicz, a native of Warrenton, VA. They are the proud owners of two Korean jindo dogs: Soju and Makkoli.